1-1-1997

Indian women's lives and labor : the indentureship experience in Trinidad and Guyana, 1845-1917.

Sumita, Chatterjee
University of Massachusetts Amherst

INDIAN WOMEN'S LIVES AND LABOR: THE INDENTURESHIP EXPERIENCE IN TRINIDAD AND GUYANA - 1845-1917

A Dissertation Presented

by

SUMITA CHATTERJEE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 1997

Department of History

INDIAN WOMEN'S LIVES AND LABOR: THE INDENTURESHIP EXPERIENCE IN TRINIDAD AND GUYANA - 1845-1917

A Dissertation Presented

by

SUMITA CHATTERJEE

Approved as to style and content by:

Paul Dosal, Chair

Jane Rausch, Member

Carmen D. Deere, Member

Lowell Gudmundson, Member

Bruce Laurie, Chair
Department of History

DEDICATION

In loving memory of Ma, Baba, and Jamaibabu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I take great pleasure in acknowledging the institutions, scholars and friends who helped during the writing and researching of this dissertation. I am grateful to the Department of History, University of Massachusetts for granting the Gordon-Bauer fellowship which allowed me to travel to England. My thanks to the authorities and staff of the Public Records Office and the British Museum Library in London, the National Archives of India in New Delhi, the National Library and the West Bengal State Archives in Calcutta, the University of West Indies Library in St. Augustine, the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, the W.E.B. DuBois Library at the University of Massachusetts, and the Richter Library at the University of Miami.

In Trinidad, I thank Prof. Bridget Brereton for leading me to new oral and written sources. I am grateful to Patricia Mohammed for making these valuable oral sources available to all researchers. I thank Prof. Rhoda Reddock for inviting me to present a paper at the Center for Gender and Development Studies, and to the students and scholars who provided a lively discussion of my work. To Prof. Brinsley Samaroo who went out of his way to introduce me to people in the community and generally make me welcome in Trinidad I express my regards and thanks. To Dr. Lester Henry I owe a huge debt of gratitude for introducing me to the history of Trinidad many years ago.

I thank Gabrielle, Rajani, and Seeta for providing friendship and valuable discussions around issues of displacement and gender. The Trinidad trip would have been 'all work and no play' but for the lively camaraderie of my fellow scholars residing in Naden's Court. I remember them fondly and thank them all, particularly Shane Batchasingh and Ann Olsen.

How does one thank those who make one feel like part of a family? To Ken, Roslyn, Sasha, and Vishala my love and gratitude for taking me in as one of the family and helping me intellectually and emotionally in innumerable ways. I remain eternally grateful and your friend always.

I thank Shell, "the village philosopher" who introduced me to men and women of the community in Pierre Road, Felicity, and Charlieville villages. I thank them for taking time off from their busy lives to talk to a nosy researcher. Above all, I express my deepest gratitude and many thanks to Mrs. Poonamma Armoogam, her daughter Mrs. Sookia, and her granddaughter Mrs. Krishendaye Bhagwandeen of Tunapuna, Trinidad for letting me intrude into their lives often to record the admirable life that Mrs. Poonamma Armoogam has led. I do hope that I have done justice to her life and struggles in this dissertation.

In India, I thank Mimi didi for providing more comfort than I deserved during my stay in Calcutta. I also thank Didi, Pumpu, Bublu, Debashis, Mrinal, Dada, Bowdi, Jamaibabu, and all the kids in the family for making the stay a happy

one. To Neelu, my dearest friend, for believing that I could do it, a special thanks. To Fulda, Noda, Pallavi, Ma, and Babu for always standing by me in my toughest moments throughout the grad school experience in the U.S.A., my warmest regards, love, and thanks.

To my friends in the U.S.A. - Anilla, Yogesh, Shan, Ann, Lelen, Ismi, Huguette, Tunde, Tulu, Jayant, Mallika, Aseem, and Rinkidi many thanks for years of supportive friendship. A very special thanks to my dear friends Sanjay and Sanjam for giving me emotional and intellectual support through the ups and downs of this endeavor. My knowledge of Indian history would not be complete without their constant guidance.

To Prof. Jane Rausch, Prof. Lowell Gudmundson, and Prof. Carmen Deere, I express my sincere thanks for never giving up on this student and providing intellectual guidance whenever needed. To my advisor Prof. Paul Dosal, I express my very deep gratitude and thanks for the many years of intellectual and emotional guidance, support and encouragement.

Last, but most importantly, to Sanjeev for pushing me always to finish this project which sometimes seemed insurmountable and for always having faith in my ability to do so. I thank him for the intellectual, emotional, and material support he has provided through our many years together. Without his constant support this dissertation would probably have not seen the light of day.

ABSTRACT

INDIAN WOMEN'S LIVES AND LABOR: THE INDENTURESHIP EXPERIENCE IN TRINIDAD AND GUYANA - 1845-1917

SEPTEMBER 1997

SUMITA CHATTERJEE, B.A. LADY SHRI RAM COLLEGE, DELHI UNIVERSITY

M.A., JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI, INDIA

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Paul Dosal

This study examines the gender dynamics of the migration and settlement of Indian indentured workers in Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917, laying particular emphasis on the ways in which migration of Indian women workers impacted and changed the dynamics of the settlement process of Indians in Trinidad and Guyana. I argue in this thesis that the presence of sufficient numbers of females throughout this particular history of indentured migration and settlement had important and far-reaching implications for the nature of rural social and economic formations that evolved in post emancipation societies of Trinidad and Guyana.

This thesis, is not then, the story *only* of women's migration, or their roles in the new social and economic formations in Trinidad and Guyana in the period 1845 to 1917, but also discusses the *relational* aspects of women's and men's experiences and the politics of gender that influenced the indentureship experiment. I examine the ways in which the

presence of a critical mass of women indentured and ex-indentured workers influenced not only the working of the sugarcane economy but also the ways in which the socio-cultural and sexual relationships evolved within the emergent rural community of Indians. The history of migration and indentureship is traced from the recruitment process in India where gender and patriarchy impacted the ways in which females were enlisted for contractual work overseas, to the eventual settlement of Indian women and men workers in their newly adopted homes in Trinidad and Guyana.

I have based this thesis on British official sources like annual emigration and immigration reports, official correspondences, parliamentary and other inquiry committee reports, censuses, and non-official sources like contemporary newspapers, journals, travel and planter memoirs, missionary memoirs, an autobiography by Anna Mahase Sr. born during my period of study, and oral interviews with ex-indentured men and women in Trinidad. Some of the hidden areas of knowledge about indentured men's and women's lives, particularly around questions of social, sexual, and ritual expressions, as also the ways in which the economic and social activities of women and men in peasant households were allocated, have been constructed through the reading of non-official sources like memoirs, newspapers, autobiographies, and three different sources of oral interviews of men and women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: WRITING WOMEN INTO THE HISTORY OF MIGRATION AND INDENTURESHIP - HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHODS

The age of imperialism in the nineteenth century ushered global movements of wealth and power, capital and labor and the intertwining of histories of colonized peoples of East and West. Thus it was that displaced Africans, Indians, Chinese, and others found themselves transported in different epochs, but under essentially similar colonial charters and imperial impulses of profit, to form "imagined communities"[1] in regions that had not even entered their imaginations. The destinies of areas such as Trinidad and Guyana of the West, got intertwined with the destinies of such far away regions of the East as China and India and, more importantly, so too did the history of these peoples.[2]

This thesis retells the history of migration and settlement of Indian indentured workers in Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917 through the lens of gender, laying particularly emphasis to the ways in which migration of Indian women workers impacted and changed the dynamics of the settlement process of Indians in Trinidad and Guyana. I argue in this thesis that the presence of sufficient numbers of females throughout this particular history of indentured migration and settlement had important and far-reaching implications for the nature of rural social and economic formations that evolved in post emancipation societies of Trinidad and Guyana.

Historiography

The nature of society and economy that emerged in the Caribbean after emancipation has sparked scholarly debate around several important themes. One strand of historiography has focused on the nature of freedom and new forms of coercion that the ex-slaves experienced, dealing primarily with issues of transition from slave to free labor. Recent revisionist studies have emphasized the importance of seeing the historical act of emancipation, not as a sharp disjuncture between the status of slavery and freedom, but as a process marked by differing degrees of unfreedom, and the subsequent transformations in society and economy stemming from particular regional social structures existing on the eve of emancipation. The existing scholarship has shown that the emergence of free wage labor was an arduously long and rocky one for Caribbean laboring classes.[3]

The second major theme, working within the larger parameters of the transition debate, focused on the particular forms that economic organization took in the Caribbean after emancipation. Two aspects of the post emancipation Caribbean economy received particular attention, namely, the ways in which the plantation system survived after emancipation, and the extent to which ex-slaves could establish an economy outside the plantation network. The Afro-Caribbean rural societies that emerged ranged from "reconstituted peasantries" to landless proletarian workers. In defining the forms of agrarian structures and relations

that emerged in the Caribbean, the questions raised and addressed have been the availability of land, planters' response to acquisition of land, policy controls, and the differing conditions under which a black peasantry and a black landless proletariat emerged, the relationship with plantations and the ways in which this system survived in the different colonies of the Caribbean.[4]

A third trend in the historiography of nineteenth century Caribbean, connected in some crucial respects to the concerns raised in this thesis, is the study of one particular form of labor use that plantations employed in the aftermath of emancipation, namely, that of indentured immigrant labor from regions as disparate as China, India, and Africa. The employment of immigrant labor was particularly intense in those areas where ex-slaves were successful in establishing an economic base independent of the plantation system. Trinidad and Guyana were among two of the Caribbean colonies which employed large numbers of indentured workers from India. Some scholars have studied immigration of these workers in the context of the development of the larger socio-economic realm of the different colonies of the Caribbean.[5] There are several works which have examined the indentureship system itself - from its impact on the plantation economy, to the socio-cultural developments of the indentured workers in their new homelands.[6]

While the historiography of post-emancipation Caribbean reveals that questions and issues of political economy and society have been frequently addressed and debated in the academy, very little attention has fallen on issues of gender in general and the histories of women in particular. Not only have women's stories been subsumed in the larger political narrative, but critical issues of the effect of gender relations on post-emancipation social formations in the Caribbean have also been overlooked. There is, however, growing concern in recent scholarship about the absence of women from the study of Caribbean society and economy.[7] Following in the footsteps of Lucille Mathurin's pioneering work on slave women in the British Caribbean, some of the most exciting works in recent years have focused on the slave woman and her encounters with and resistance to slavery.[8] In recent years, several anthologies and articles have also addressed issues of gender, sexual division of labor, and women's work and contribution to the economy and society before and after emancipation, but these are still growing and dynamic fields.[9]

An important contribution to feminist scholarship in the British Caribbean has been Patricia Mohammed's doctoral thesis "A Social History of Post-Migrant Indians in Trinidad from 1917 to 1947 - A Gender Perspective" which is the first detailed monograph using gender as the primary lens through which to analyze and narrate the developments in this new group of immigrants. Aside from the two important

introductory chapters which discuss at some length the theoretical and methodological implications of feminist history, particularly the ways in which gender is defined and can be used in the writing of history, her thesis focuses on the processes of community formation through the manifestation and negotiation of gender relations, and the ways in which internal and external boundaries, as also constructions of masculinity, femininity, and sexual identities amongst Indian migrants are created. Chapter Three "situates the migrants in the transitional period of indentureship from 1845 to 1916," tracing the historical origins of gendered negotiations between women and men, but in a schematic manner by her own admission. It is precisely this "transitional" period that is the subject of my thesis where I have tried to do justice to what Mohammed recognizes as "a body of extremely complex and rich historical material."[10]

While the impact of Indian indentureship and immigrant labor on Caribbean plantation society has been addressed by various scholars, no single monograph has used gender as a category for understanding the historical developments of this immigrant group in the period under indentureship. The earliest work on the subject, was Rhoda Reddock's article, "Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago 1845-1917: Freedom Denied," which brought the hitherto largely unknown fact of substantial female migration from India to the Caribbean into the foreground of historical scholarship

on Indian indentureship.[11] In this article she raised some important concerns relating to recruitment in India, their involvement in the production and reproduction processes of the plantation economy, their social and domestic organization, and the role of the colonial state and church in their lives. While being extremely valuable in bringing the silenced voice of Indian women workers into the center stage of history of indentureship, the wide expanse of the concerns raised in the article, also made some of her conclusions and interpretations exploratory at best. The value of this article, particularly for my own research, has been primarily as a frame of reference to do a more elaborate and detailed historical inquiry into the concerns raised by Reddock, a process which substantiates some of her formulations, but also digresses in important ways from some early conclusions.

My research, taking inspiration from Reddock's work retells the history of indentureship in Trinidad and Guyana in the period 1845 to 1917, keeping female migrants as the primary subjects of this history. Using gender as a tool for historical analysis, this thesis addresses issues of both political economy and sociological questions about identity and social formations in the Indian immigrant community as it struggled to create a new 'home' in Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917. I locate my work at both levels of feminist historiography, namely in the early projects of inclusion of females as important subjects of historical

enquiry, as well as in underlining the politics of gender in reimagining and rewriting history, in this case the history of indentureship, migration, and settlement.

Women's History, Gender History or Both: An Inquiry into Methods and Sources

This thesis examines Indian immigrant women's lives and labor on sugar plantations in Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917. It attempts to give voice to a largely silenced sex amongst the laboring classes on plantations, making it similar, in some respects, to the early feminist projects of writing women into history as its subjects and active agents. These early inclusionary projects inevitably led to a rather exclusionary path and the writing of separated histories, valorizing female agency and experience as sharply different and somewhat privileged from those of male subjects. While these early feminist approaches to historical scholarship had their value in making women's experiences important and viable subjects of history writing, highlighting that the "personal" was as important as the "political", it nevertheless tended to make such histories, or "Women's History", a separate category in the larger discipline of History, not making any radical epistemological challenges to the discipline itself, or the ways in which histories were told or imagined.[12]

It is precisely to get away from the traps of exclusion and valorization of one particular experience over another that this thesis, although inclusionary in that it gives

voice to subjects (Indian women) hitherto not included in the history of migration and settlement into Trinidad and Guyana at any great length, finds the category of gender as a methodological tool useful, indeed necessary for understanding the complexities of the history of migration and settlement itself. This thesis, is not then, the story *only* of women's migration, or their roles in the new social and economic formations in Trinidad and Guyana in the period 1845 to 1917, but also of the *relational* aspects of women's and men's experiences and the relations of power that influenced every layer of the indentureship experiment.

Power, or lack thereof, can best be illustrated through the lens of gender. The condition of women's and men's indentured immigrant status, compounded by their colonized position as subjects of an imperial state, the politics of competing patriarchies, and male/female struggles over the construction of an "ideal woman" as "good worker," "moral housewife" and so on, were manifestations of power struggles and constituted the politics of gender in the new immigrant spaces. As Joan Scott has argued, gender "is a primary way of signifying relationships of power." The ways in which I have utilized the category of gender in retelling the history of Indian indentured migration and settlement in Trinidad and Guyana is best delineated in Scott's formulations:

> Gender and "politics" are thus antithetical neither to one another nor to recovery of the female subject. Broadly defined they dissolve distinctions between public and private and avoid arguments about the separate and distinctive qualities of women's character and

> experience. They challenge the accuracy of fixed binary distinctions between men and women in the past and present,....The realization of the radical potential of women's history comes in the writing of histories that focus on women's experiences *and* analyze the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics. Feminist history then becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies.[13] (emphasis in original)

In this history, while gender has been the primary signifier, it has not provided the only site for understanding the ways in which immigrant male and female workers lived their day to day lives. In the retelling of this history then, different norms of patriarchies, class positions, race, and religion have provided the necessary complexities. Notions such as "power" and "patriarchy" in particular have been used in their historical contexts, rather than as any a priori definitions, or constructions of an abstract or absolute condition of society.[14] For instance, the practices of patriarchy in India from where indentured women and men were recruited, differed in content and form according to locations on caste/class/religious hierarchies which made migration of some women "easier" than others. Similarly patriarchal injunctions on plantations were closely tied to race and imperialist politics. European dominant gender values were operative in the production and reproduction of plantation economy as well as in the social and domestic spheres. Material exploitation of women as

workers was compounded also by both white dominant and subordinated Indian gender values which were often employed in recasting the female worker into certain fixed ideas of honor, morality, and tradition. The female worker, however, was not a voiceless victim or object of recasting, but negotiated the differing terrains of patriarchal norms at levels of resistance and even coalition. It is in these historical contexts that even "power" necessarily loses its abstraction, and has been employed in the Foucauldian sense as neither fixed, nor primordial or binarily opposed (as in ruler versus ruled), but "exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non egalitarian and mobile relations."[15]

I have based this thesis on British official sources like annual emigration and immigration reports, official correspondences, parliamentary and other inquiry committee reports, censuses, and non-official sources like contemporary newspapers, journals, travel and planter memoirs, missionary memoirs, an autobiography by Anna Mahase Sr. born during my period of study, and oral interviews with ex-indentured men and women in Trinidad. In the course of doing archival research and sifting through the massive array of documents on indentured immigration that are lodged in the imperial and national archives, I was at once struck by three facts - first, the immense body of knowledge that the British imperial agents produced about Indian indentureship, second, that most of this knowledge was either descriptive conditions of laborers on plantations or ways to reform or discipline

workers or the system itself, and lastly but significantly all inquiry committee reports (with the exception of maybe an officer or a magistrate here or there), reported that conditions of indentured workers were generally good, that they in fact within a short period of time improved their condition from abject poverty in India to a degree of prosperity in their new environs. Thus in the case of indentured workers, similar to what Dipesh Chakrabarty notes for jute mill working conditions in colonial Bengal, the colonial reports and documents reproduced "a view of labor conditions that really belonged to the owners of capital,....(and) significant aspects of working-class conditions remained hidden from it."[16]

My project of trying to retrieve women workers' voices to underscore the gendered aspects of plantation economic and social formations became doubly troublesome, for not only were they unimportant to larger imperial projects of knowledge production by virtue of their class location, but also by their sex. Women migrant workers appeared in very fixed, objectified categories which were either concerned with ratios, numbers and demographic inputs, or as the "native other" barbaric, immoral or streetwise. I have used whatever partial and limited census statistical information that was available for women workers, but with Anderson's warnings about some of the pitfalls of census categories. Writing about the colonial state's efforts to make sense of the confusing 'jumble' of identities of "native" subjects and

in a bid to make them comprehensible and governable, Anderson notes:

> These 'identities,' imagined by the (confusedly) classifying mind of the colonial state, still awaited a reification which imperial administrative penetration would soon make possible. One notices, in addition, the census-makers' passion for completeness and unambiguity. Hence their intolerance of multiple, politically 'transvestite,' blurred, or changing identifications. Hence the weird subcategory, under each racial group, of 'Others' - who nonetheless, are absolutely not to be confused with *other* 'Others.' The fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one - and only one - extremely clear place. No fractions.[17]

Furthermore, colonial official documents, the main repository of imperial archives, included women at only those instances where this knowledge was needed in the larger schema of imperial economic needs, or for better colonial governance of restive workers on plantations. Thus, it was primarily in the realm of maintaining a minimum ratio, or in the concerns over controlling "wife murders" on plantations that women workers entered the official imagination. I have used these sources, but with a critical view of their limiting constructions. Thus, an uncritical reading and dependence only on these sources gives a fleeting and most often fixed impression of women's identities in both their country of origin, India, and in the countries of their settlement, Trinidad and Guyana. Interestingly, from such sources then, two contrary images emerge regarding women's behavior and identities, namely, that of subjugated widows fleeing a repressive, tradition-bound society for the free

spaces on plantations abroad, and disloyal, immoral sexual behavior on plantations. This thesis, which has depended on other important voices, will show that the history of indentured migration and settlement, particularly the gender politics of this settlement, is more complex than such simple formulations.

Some of the hidden areas of knowledge about indentured men and women's lives, particularly around questions of social, sexual, and ritual expressions, as also the ways in which the economic and social activities of women and men in peasant households were allocated, has been constructed through the reading of non-official sources like memoirs, newspapers, autobiographies, and three different sources of oral interviews of men and women. These oral sources include my interviews with one ex-indentured worker, who came from India as a six year old girl; several conversations with second and third generation Indo-Trinidadian women and men conducted in Charlieville village and Tunapuna in Trinidad; a published account of the recording of five ex-indentured workers' life-stories by Noor Kumar Mahabir in The Still Cry; and the interviews of ex-indentured workers from India and second and third generation Indo-Trinidadians conducted by Patricia Mohammed which are lodged in the University of West Indies Oral History Project of the St. Augustine, Trinidad campus.

I have used these rich sources for two purposes. These interviews gave me an even deeper sense of the limitations of

the official sources, and brought to play in my own historical imagination the complex lives these women and men had led, making the colonialist discourse about gender relations in the Indian community skewed since they highlighted only the victim/victimizer frame of references. I was therefore, determined to subvert this rather essentialist colonial vision of Indian women and men workers as either victims or victimizers of each other (as in libidinous, immoral women and/or responses of jealous Hindu men). These sources made me aware of a wider history of community formation, struggles, and empowering projects over constructions of identities. I have used these sources sparingly in direct quotes, but their diverse voices and the rich details of their lives have remained a subtext through much of the formulations in recreating the dynamic, multiple forces (not only the bi-polar colonial imagery of victim/victimizer) that shaped their social and domestic spheres of lives under indenture.

In Chapter Two I examine the gender dynamics of the recruitment process in India, laying particular emphasis on the ways in which prevailing British Victorian and Indian Brahmanical patriarchal views complicated the construction and flow of female indentured labor from rural to overseas regions of the British Empire. I look at not only the question of why or how women and men ended up in depots, ships, and plantations, but also who these women were. An inquiry into the questions of 'why', 'how', and 'who',

implicates the politics of both imperialism and patriarchy in the channeling of female labor from India to Trinidad and Guyana. I employ the term "artifice" for the mechanism of recruitment to emphasize not only the colonial, mercantile nature of the labor market, but also that the workers who formed the "supply side" neither exercised deliberated choice nor were "free" agents in this migration process. Sifting critically through sometimes frozen, and often dubious colonial sociological categories and census information, this chapter also looks at the diversity and ambiguities of social origins and identities of the female migrants and in doing so, reveals that easy generalizations regarding indentureship as some form of voluntary movement or "escape of widows" through this form of migration, is quite untenable.

Chapter Three narrates and analyses the critical travel time between Calcutta and Madras in India, and Port-Of-Spain and Georgetown in Trinidad and Guyana, respectively. This passage, I argue serves as a metaphor in understanding subsequent gender relations that emerged on the plantations. The residential patterns in the depots and the journey across the oceans became the first symbolic and real moment of crisis in the familiar patterns of social relations between women and men, and the early attempts to negotiate and confront known patriarchal values and gender ideologies. This was perhaps not a conscious or articulated effort by women or men to change their known patterns of social and sexual behavior, but the material spaces of depots, ships, and the

experience of travel itself generated different registers of such social exchanges. This chapter examines the ways in which depot life and the long voyage became the first testing grounds of making sense of their altered status as immigrants entering an alien and alienated regimen of plantation life and labor. Such encounters, exchanges, and improvisations do not necessarily mean that this first disruption led women from "traditionalism" (implying repression and unfreedom) to "modernism" of plantations (implying certain degrees of freedom). These early disruptions in the known and familiar patterns of a gender system, as the following chapters show, was marked by an ambiguous space where the material and psychological forces of "free" and "unfree" were mixed up, and the privileging of free over unfree does not hold up in the examination of the history of immigrant women and men under indenture.

In Chapter Four I study the ways in which gender ideologies and prevailing patriarchal stereotypes became ideals for work management and labor allocation on plantations and intruded in the material working of the sugar plantations of Trinidad and Guyana. I examine the ways in which female workers (both indentured and free) got located at the interstices of a triple exploitation of class, ethnicity, and gender. I also look at how the presence of Indian women workers complicated working class relations on plantations, not only between Indian men and women, but also with other ethnic groups, giving rise to tensions between

competing, though unequal patriarchies - the hegemonising white, the subordinated Indian, and sometimes, albeit very rarely, with the Afro-Caribbean sector. Aside from this competition, a gendered reading of the political economy of the sugar plantations in the period of indentureship, reveals sites of compromise and collusion between these different patriarchies as well. As the period of indentureship matured from the 1880s, this is evidenced particularly in the negotiations being made increasingly with males on questions of their "wives" labor.

In Chapter Five I study the emergence of subsistence, peasant, and tenant cultivation amongst the ex-indentured Indian women and men. In this chapter I argue that it was in the realm of setting up alternative modes of survival away (mostly partially) from the overarching nexus of the plantation economy, that the labor of women remained particularly vital in this early period of settlement between 1845 and 1917. I examine the ways in which women's work was a critical and creative agency in the survival and settlement of the immigrant community in Trinidad and Guyana. This chapter looks at the impact that the presence of women made to different elements of the household economy, namely in self-provisioning, peasant and surplus agricultural production and the formation of families. Of particular significance is not only that the presence of women in this sector needs to be recognized or recorded, but that this presence had far-reaching implications for the ways in which

relations of power within the family, the household, and the larger community/village were negotiated, and shifted over time to male members.

Chapter Six looks at the contestations and coalitions that underwrote much of the social sphere of indentured and unindentured women's and men's lives. The absence of traditional social norms and values from the old country, gave a certain new space in which women and men constructed new identities, a space which became a 'bittersweet' experience for women, being at once somewhat "liberating" as well as "debilitating." Using the metaphor of "cane and cutlass," I show in this chapter the ways in which, by virtue of their entry into Trinidad and Guyana as workers and by their fewer numbers, the women exercised a degree of choice in social and sexual matters, but for these choices they also often experienced the violence of the cutlass on their bodies. These experiences were however not the only sites of social constructions of identity and community amongst the immigrants. This chapter looks at some of the other areas of negotiations, like the emergence of female spaces of empowerment around important secular and religious rituals and celebrations, and also the influence of the Church and the colonial state in contestations between men and women, and their ways to make the new immigrant community easily 'governable.'

In Chapter Seven I conclude that a gendered examination of the history of migration and settlement of Indians under

the charter of indentureship, shows that the politics of gender, from recruitment in India to their permanent settlement in Trinidad and Guyana, was a dynamic and contested terrain between men and women, and between them and the larger colonial institutions. The presence of a critical mass of female migrants through the seventy years of travel and settlement had important implications for the ways in which the immigrant community marked its boundaries and created social and sexual identities.

Notes

[1]This term is taken from Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities - Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

[2]I use the post-colonial and 'modern' nomenclature rather than "British Guiana", except when directly quoting from primary and secondary sources.

I have used the term "Indian" to denote those who were brought to the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas from the regions of the Indian sub-continent, which today includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma, and Sri Lanka. In the thesis the term "Indian" has been used for those workers who were born in the Indian sub-continent and brought under British imperial charters as indentured workers to the Caribbean. I have used the terms "Indo-Guyanese" or Indo-Trinidadian" for the generations of workers who were born into indenture but in Guyana and Trinidad respectively. Similarly the term "Afro-Caribbean" is used for workers of African origin born in the Caribbean or sufficiently creolised. By the mid-nineteenth century most ex-slaves and free blacks identified with the Caribbean culturally, socially, and materially.

[3]The list of works is too long to be cited here, but some of the important monographs and articles are Philip D. Curtin, Two Jamaicas - The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony 1830-1860 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); W.A. Green, British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-65 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); T.C. Holt, The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Manuel M. Fraginals, Frank Moya Pons, and Stanley Engerman eds., Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Rebecca J. Scott, Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); O. Nigel Bolland, The Formation of a Colonial Society: Belize from Conquest to Crown Colony (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher eds., The Meaning of Freedom - Economics, Politics, and Culture After Slavery (Pittsburg and London: University of Pittsburg Press, 1992); Also see by various authors, "Part D: Caribbean Adjustments to Slave Emancipation" in Abolition and its Aftermath - The Historical Context, 1790-1916, ed. David Richardson (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1985), pp. 183-273; Rebecca J. Scott, "Exploring the Meaning of Freedom: Postemancipation Societies in Comparative Perspective," Hispanic American Historical Review 68, no.3 (1988): 407-428; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Labor and Emancipation in Dominica: Contribution To A Debate," Caribbean Quarterly 30 (1984): 73-84; O. Nigel Bolland, "Systems of Domination After Slavery: The Control of Land and Labor in the British West Indies after 1838," Comparative Studies in Society and History 23, no.4 (1989): 591-619; Swinthon Wilmot, "Emancipation in Action: Workers and Wage Conflict in Jamaica, 1838-1840," Jamaica Journal 19, no.3 (1986): 55-62; For an exhaustive historiographical review on different concerns of the emancipation debate relating to the

Caribbean see Michael Craton, "The Transition From Slavery to Free wage Labor in the Caribbean, 1780-1890: A survey with Particular Reference to recent Scholarship," Slavery and Abolition - A Journal of Comparative Studies 13, no.2 (1992): 37-67.

[4]Some of the works are Douglas Hall, Free Jamaica - An Economic History (1838-1865) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); Jay R. Mandle, The Plantation Economy - Population and Economic Change in Guyana (1838-1960) (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973); Alan H. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves - The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972); Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman eds., Labor in the Caribbean - From Emancipation to Independence (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1988); Sidney Mintz, Caribbean Transformations (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1974); Walter Rodney, A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Howard Johnson, The Bahamas in Slavery and Freedom (Kingston and London: Ian Randle Publishers and James Currey Publishers, 1991); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Sidney Mintz, "From Plantations to Peasantries in the Caribbean," in Caribbean Contours, eds. Sidney Mintz and Sally Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 127-153; Peter Fraser, "The Fictive Peasantry: Caribbean Rural Groups in the Nineteenth Century," in Contemporary Caribbean - A Sociological Reader Vol.1, ed. Susan Craig (Port-Of-Spain, Trinidad: by the author, 1981), pp. 319-347.

[5]For some works relating to Trinidad and Guyana see Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves; Bridget Brereton, Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad (1870-1900) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Bridget Brereton, A History of Modern Trinidad (1783-1962) (Kingston and Port-of-Spain: Heinemann Educational Books (Caribbean) Ltd., 1981); Rodney, Guyanese Working People; Brian L. Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society - Guyana After Slavery (1838-1891) (Montreux: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1987); Brian L. Moore, Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism - Colonial Guyana (1838-1900) (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens's University Press, 1995).

[6]For a general history of Indian Indentureship to Mauritius and other parts of the world see Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labor Overseas, 1830-1920 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). For the most comprehensive historical work on Chinese and Indian Indentureship in the Caribbean see Walton Look Lai, Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar - Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Another detailed historical work on Indian Indentureship is K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labor - Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana (1875-1917) (Kingston and London: Ian Randle Publishers and James Currey Publishers, 1994). The scholarship on social and economic developments in the Indian communities of Guyana and Trinidad comes from various disciplines like anthropology, history, and sociology. Some of these are as follows: Arthur Niehoff and Juanita

Niehoff, East Indians in the West Indies (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1960); Morton Klass, East Indians in Trinidad: A Study of Cultural Persistence (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961; reprint, Prospects Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1988); Chandra Jayawardena, Conflict and Solidarity in a Guianese Plantation (London: Athlone Press, 1963); Barton Schwartz, Caste in Overseas Indian Communities (San Francisco: Chandler, 1967); Judith Weller, The East Indian Indenture in Trinidad (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Institute of Caribbean Studies, 1968); Dwarka Nath, A History of Indians in Guyana, 2nd. rev. ed. (London: by the author, 1970); Bridget Brereton and Winston Dookeran, eds., East Indians in the Caribbean: Colonialism and the Struggle for Identity (New York: Kraus, 1982); John La Guerre ed., From Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians of Trinidad (St. Augustine, Trinidad: University of West Indies Press, 1985); Basdeo Mangru, Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labor Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884 (London: Hansib, 1987); David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo eds., India in the Caribbean. (London: Hansib, 1987); Frank Birbalsingh ed., Indenture and Exile - The Indo-Caribbean Experience (Toronto: TSAR and the Ontario Association for Studies in Indo-Caribbean Culture, 1989); Marianne Soares Ramesar, Survivors of Another Crossing, A History of East Indians in Trinidad (St. Augustine, Trinidad: University of West Indies, School of Continuing Studies, 1994); David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo eds., Across the Dark Waters, Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1996). Verene A. Shepherd, "Control, resistance, accomodation and race relations: Aspects of indentureship experience of East Indian immigrants in Jamaica, 1845-1921," in Across the Dark Waters, eds. Dabydeen and Samaroo, pp. 65-87.

[7]Bridget Brereton has voiced these concerns, outlining some feminist theoretical debates in the study of women, with particular reference to the study of the Caribbean woman, not as an abstracted category but as a historical subject. In a historiographical essay, she has also highlighted some of the exciting new work on Caribbean women by scholars, as also the areas for further investigation. See B. Brereton, "General Problems and Issues in Studying the History of Women," in Gender in Caribbean Development, eds. Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd (Mona, Jamaica, St.Augustine, Trinidad, and Cave Hill, Barbados: University of West Indies, Women and Development Project, 1988), pp. 125-143.

[8]See for instance the works of Lucille Mathurin, The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery (Kingston, Jamaica: Jamaica Institute, 1975); Hilary Beckles, Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1989); Marietta Morrissey, Slave Women in the New world: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1989); Barbara Bush, Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 (London: James Currey Ltd., 1990).

[9]Some path breaking monographs are Mohammed and Shepherd eds., Gender in Caribbean Develoment; Rhoda Reddock, Women, Labor and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers Ltd., 1994); Janet Momsen ed., Women and Change in the Caribbean - A Pan-

Caribbean Perspective (London: James Currey Ltd, 1993); Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey eds., Engendering History - Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective. (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995).

[10]Patricia Mohammed, "A Social History of Post-Migrant Indians in Trinidad from 1917 to 1947 - A Gender Perspective" (Ph.D. Thesis, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands, 1994). Also see her following articles: "Gender as a Primary Signifier in the Construction of Community and State among Indians in Trindad" Caribbean Quarterly 40, nos. 3&4 (Sept.-Dec. 1994): 32-43; "Structures of Experience: Gender, Ethnicity and Class in the Lives of two East Indian Women" in Trinidad Ethnicity, ed. Kevin Yelvington (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), pp. 208-234; "Writing Gender into History: The Negotiation of Gender relations Among Indian Men and women in Post-indenture Trinidad Society, 1917-1947" in Engendering History, eds. Shepherd, Brereton, and Bailèy, pp. 20-47.

Verene A. Shepherd has written on Indian women and the indentureship experience in Jamaica. See Verene Shepherd, "Emancipation through Servitude: Aspects of the Condition of Indian Women in Jamaica 1845-1945," in Caribbean Freedom - Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present, eds.Hilary Beckles and Verene A. Shepherd, pp. 245-250. Also Verene Shepherd, "The Indentureship and Post-indentureship Experience of Indian Females in Jamaica, 1845-1943." in Engendering History, eds. V. Shepherd, B. Brereton, and B. Bailey, pp.233-257.

[11]Rhoda Reddock, "Indian Women and Indentureship in Trindad and Tobago 1845-1917: Freedom Denied" Caribbean Quarterly 32, nos. 3 & 4 (1986):27-49.

[12]The early scholarship is too vast to be listed here, but it needs to be emphasized that these early projects of "women's history" were important in that they provided massive documentation of subjects as varied as female participation in the workforce, to every day details of domestic and family life, and to some extent provided the rich empirical basis on which future feminist scholars could theorize about gender.

[13]Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and The Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 26-27. See particularly Chap.II "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in the above work, pp. 28-50.

[14]In an interesting discussion of concepts and controversies around feminist theory, particularly the feminist constructions of patriarchy, which sometime tend to ahistoricity, Amrita Chhachhi has warned of the easy adoptions of overarching theories of patriarchy to explain very different social and historical locations of women. As she reiterates in her conclusion, "For Third World women, subordination is not simply arithmetic (sex+class+race) but a combination of all three. To analyze this experience, then we necessarily have to question and perhaps abandon the dualism of production-reproduction, nature-culture, capitalism-patriarchy." (Amrita Chhachhi, "Concepts in feminist Theory: Consensus and Controversy," in Gender in Caribbean Development, eds. Mohammed and Shepherd, pp. 78-98.)

Also, for problems in conceptualising patriarchy, as well as various scholarly efforts to historicize the ways in which patriarchic ideologies operated in colonial India see Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid eds., Recasting Women - Essays in Indian Colonial History (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990). As Sangari and Vaid argue in their Introduction, "Firstly given the regional, class and caste variations of patriarchal practices and their diverse histories, it is necessary to have specific studies....to rush into theoretical generalization at this stage would be to risk both simplification and rigidity. We are not however making a plea for theoretical eclecticism or "pluralism," but for flexibility within a field which is still being defined." (Recasting Women, eds. Sangari and Vaid, pp. 1-2.)

[15]Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality : An Introduction, Vol.1, Vintage Books Edition, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p.94. For a full treatment of philosophical concerns with power and the history of sexuality see also his other volumes, The Use of Pleasure - The History of Sexuality, Vol.2 (New York: Vintage Books, 1986); and The Care of The Self - The History of Sexuality, Vol.3 (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

[16]Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Conditions for Knowledge of Working-Class Conditions: Employers, Government and the Jute Workers of Calcutta, 1890-1940," in Selected Subaltern Studies, eds. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 195, pp. 179-230.

[17]Anderson, Imagined Communities, pp. 165-166.

CHAPTER II

'PERMISSION OF THE PATRIARCH' - GENDERED RECRUITMENT IN INDIA (1845-1917)

> *... small boys cannot go without their father's leave nor should wives go without (their) husband's (sic) permission....*[1](my emphasis)

In this chapter, I look at how a market for labor was created in India and its movement determined by the demands of imperial capital in Trinidad and Guyana. The articulation of female migration merits a gendered reading rather than mere acknowledgment and adding of women to ship lists. The ways in which contemporary (both Indian and British imperial) patriarchal views negotiated, complicated, and influenced the construction of the recruitment process, particularly the flow of female labor is studied in this chapter. The British imperial view objectified and codified "Indian reality" and her "subject natives" in the framework of "traditionalism", by the "privileging of 'scriptural' interpretations of social law at the expense of the fluidity of local community practices."[2] Such strict codification and categorization of Britain's view of India, reinforced a certain narrow Brahmanical and Victorian view of women, leveling out in British colonial perception at least, the variety of transgressions of priestly Hindu scriptures that existed in the differing practices of customary laws and social conduct. These perceptions would reflect in the gendered ways in which laws and colonial policy on recruitment of female labor would be laid out.

Other elements which complicated the study of the recruitment process were the practices of "native" patriarchy. Rather than assuming that there was a "classical Indian patriarchy" operating in all regions of the sub-continent from where the women and men were recruited, we should recognize that in its practice, this supposedly classical patriarchy had important markers of difference.[3] These differences were neither small nor insignificant, and interjections of caste, class, religion, and region were critical in identifying the varying practices of "native" patriarchy.

While previous scholarship on the indentureship experiment has dwelt on the conditions (largely macro economic) that existed in colonial India in the mid-nineteenth century which facilitated such a large deployment of workers for plantations in other parts of the colonized world, little has been made of the age of imperialism and its impulses which underwrote this migration of women and men under indenture. Thus, while the dynamics and agency of both coerciveness and choice apply in varying degrees in this narrative of migration, the question that I am asking in this chapter is not only *why* [4] women and men migrated, but *how* it was that they ended up in depots and ships. The possibilities of being taken overseas in such large numbers[5] was created, articulated, and controlled by imperial impulses of the time. One can hardly envision a scenario where an Indian peasant - man or woman, uprooted from his or her land would

have the means, methods, or wherewithal to go to a Trinidadian sugar plantation for work.[6] The means and methods were provided by the British imperial presence in India, through an institutionalized and controlled system of recruitment.

The Artifice[7] of Labor Demand and Supply

The planters of Trinidad and Guyana greeted the abolition of the slave trade in British colonies in 1807, the enactment of full emancipation in 1834, and the termination of the phase of "apprenticeship" by 1838 with dismay and demanded some other form of "controlled" labor for their estates. Trinidadian and Guyanese (white, and primarily English) planters, raising loudly the specter of an imminent collapse of the plantation sugar economy, petitioned and pressured metropolitan Britain to take adequate steps to ensure a regular supply of labor. Anticipating the flight of freed slave labor from all plantation activity, the planters drew a picture of massive labor shortages on plantations.[8]

Both private and public means were employed to enlist indentured labor from the neighboring Caribbean islands, Africa, Portugal, France, and the United States. Even before the "apprenticeship" phase was over, John Gladstone, using private means and capital made arrangements to ship workers from India to Guyana. By this scheme, 414 indentured laborers left Calcutta for Guyana in 1838, of whom 396 reached Guyana. However, such private initiatives were discontinued within

the year in the face of agitation by the Anti-Slavery Society in Britain and its colonies.[9]

In the years between the "apprenticeship" period (1834-1838), and the establishment of a controlled and regulated traffic in indentured labor from India (1854-60)[10], planters worked hard to influence official and non-official opinion, both within the British Parliament and outside, into believing and espousing the dogma of labor scarcity on the sugar plantations. This scarcity was ostensibly due to the flight of freed black labor to non-plantation lands and activity. The reality, however, of post-emancipation plantation sugar production crisis was the result of not only the non-availability of a regular supply of labor, but also due to technological weaknesses in the production process as well as conflicting interests of the metropolitan economy and inter-colonial trade. Sugar production declined in the period between 1838 and 1848, in both Trinidad and Guyana,[11] but the reason for this decline was not merely the non-availability or scarcity of labor, as the planters tried to project. The tendency to overstate the case of labor scarcity has been aptly portrayed by West Indian scholar David Lowenthal, who wrote:

> Habituation to slavery had blinded planters to the diseconomies of the plantation system; emancipation made a better scapegoat than economics. Planters and foreign observers alike commonly attributed the decline to ex-slave laziness.[12]

The "diseconomies" of the plantation production system, particularly in Trinidad and Guyana predated the abolition of slavery itself. Both countries were relatively new British possessions and the plantation system based on slave labor was only a few decades old. John Davy, a colonial official resident in the West Indies from 1845 to 1848 quotes a Trinidadian native on the backwardness of agricultural practices:

> It should be remembered that as compared with all the English and French Islands, and most other sugar growing countries, Trinidad is but of modern date. No capital invested by father or son through the successive generations of two or three centuries in permanent works, -such as bridges, or cutting hills for roads, making wells, water tanks or aqueducts, substantial buildings capable of enduring through ages, is to be found on any sugar estate purchased in this colony. Everything is comparatively new and temporary.[13]

In Guyana too, the non rational economic practices of slave plantation production system continued into the 1850s. Davy, in discussing the agricultural practices in Guyana showed:

> Disappointment and regret at the little skill displayed in the cultivation of the estates....the system of cultivation remains exactly as in the times of slavery, every part of the operations of culture being performed by manual labor.[14]

Unwilling and unmotivated to make radical changes in the plantation production process, the planters sought to continue the labor intensive, non-mechanized form of agrarian production by adopting a labor system that would ensure a fixed, controllable, and immobile labor force. Legislative

policies against vagrancy and squatting on land suggest devious forms of labor control were introduced by the Trinidadian and Guyanese ruling elites, influenced and driven by planters' interests.[15] These measures proved unsatisfactory for labor though available, had lost its predictability and regularity.

Foreign labor was sought not as a corrective to scarcity, but in fact to flood the market and drive down general wages, and have greater control over the labor supply.[16] The indentured labor immigration system, which was developed after a series of other failed efforts by the planters, proved ideally suited for this hankering for control. This system ultimately squashed any attempts at the creation of free market mechanisms in labor - its demand, supply, and wages were orchestrated by planter interests.

The specter of labor scarcity drawn by the planters of Trinidad and Guyana was based on anticipated fear of the loss of control over labor, rather than on an established reality in the period 1834-1840. While, due to availability of land particularly in Trinidad, there was a degree of free black peasant production emerging, no special encouragement in the form of capital loans, or legislative backing was provided to the fledgling black peasantry which acquired land in the early years of settlement through squatting. In Guyana most arable land was located in the coastal regions which needed large irrigation schemes and embankments against flooding for successful cultivation. Without government aid small peasant

homesteads could not survive in such conditions, and in this period little help was forthcoming. There was, therefore, still a large black population available for the sugar plantations. As one Guyanese planter Barton Premium, observed in 1839, quoting the words of his black driver, '"Aha! Massa," cried David, an old driver, as he shook my hand, "all free now, neber mind, work all the same, man most work, no work, no eat."'[17]

For the planters, as Premium notes in his diary, the two great evils of emancipation were "the absence of controlling power over the negroes" and the decline in labor supply.[18] It was precisely to get "control" over the labor supply which led planters to lobby aggressively for indentured contract workers for their plantations. The planters also cited the unfair competition that they faced from slave holding plantation economies like Cuba and Brazil. As Premium notes in a diary entry of September 1846:

> ...there is more of systematic arrangement in order to procure from them the utmost amount of work which their physical powers are capable of rendering....They are usually from 16 to 18 hours at work in turn for ample nourishment, while ours are only for 4 hours engaged for hire, 2 months of which are equal to the whole annual cost of a Cuban slave. The planters of that island have thus 4 times the work for a sixth of the cost....the planter of Cuba, and (more especially) of Brazil, can rely on having as many slaves as he may require.[19]

The planters, in a bid to retain some of the privileges enjoyed by the Brazilian and Cuban slave holders, overstated their case about the decline in the availability of labor. As

one British missionary in an argument with a Guyanese planter notes:

> You are all, at this moment, under the bug bear, or rather you were, before today, living in constant dread of losing your estates from want of labourers, and the imperial government wisely interferes to prevent you from injuring yourselves and others by importing unsuitable people, under this *unreasonable apprehension*.[20] (my emphasis).

This "unreasonable apprehension", nevertheless was portrayed quite successfully, in the corridors of power and policy-making as reasonable grounds for the need for a well-regulated labor immigration system. Between the years 1838 and 1845, after which regular shiploads of indentured laborers were brought in from India, the planters used private and public means to enlist labor from other Caribbean islands, Africa, Portugal, France, and the United States. Planters who owned vessels traveled to the neighboring islands of Grenada, St. Christopher, or Nevis and often advanced cash as loans, to the workers to encourage them to come and work on their plantations. Planters who did not own boats or ships often offered bounties to captains of trading ships on condition that they bring workers back for plantation work. Most such schemes failed precisely because there was not enough controlling power that the planters could exercise. As L.A.A. DeVerteuil, a French Creole elite member of Trinidad, notes:

> ...as there was (sic) no legal provisions specifying the condition of contract, or binding the immigrants and employers to their observances, many of the immigrants actually left, or were enticed to leave, the estates to which they were attached, the planters who

> paid for their passage and made advances thus losing a part, or even the whole of the money advanced.[21]

These measures remained experimental until 1854, when a clear, controlled, and regulated traffic in indentured labor was established with substantial aid, both fiscal and infrastructural, from the colonial governments of Trinidad, Guyana, and India as also the metropolis of Great Britain. An uninterrupted and regular supply of labor which was virtually trapped and immobile within the contractual terms laid down in the immigration ordinances, was drawn from colonial India.

Having already established itself quite securely in the governance of vast tracts of different regions of India, the British colonial state saw no compelling reason why it should not channel labor to its overseas interests. This "mode of appropriation" of labor was the well-regulated and controlled apparatus of recruitment that was set up by British imperial policy, ordinances, depots, officers, and their agents. The institutional apparatus of recruitment remained shaky and impermanent between the years 1838 and 1854. During this period the basic terms of the indentured contract remained contentious, and different experiments were tried. The most debated issues between the Home Government and the local legislators in the colonies, was the duration of the contract of indenture and the payments for repatriation after five years of labor to India. Initially, between 1840 and 1848, prospective laborers signed single-year contracts renewable every year for a period of five years, after completion of

which she or he had the right to free repatriation back. In 1848, the Colonial Office allowed three year contracts, but it was only after 1854, after the government of India passed certain laws, that a regular, uninterrupted supply of labor from India was ensured to the planters of Trinidad and Guyana. In 1854, the five year contracts came to force, with the amendment that another five years of voluntary reindenture (thereby a compulsory ten years residence in the colony) alone would give the laborer the right to free passage back to India. Various small ordinances were passed in the period after 1854 to straighten out the initial problems of the system. The next major Ordinance to affect the indentureship system and recruitment of labor was the Ordinance No. 7 of 1873 for Guyana and the Ordinance No. 13 of 1870 for Trinidad. Among the major changes affecting labor in these ordinances was the cessation of five year reindentures in Guyana and the reduction of the term of indenture for female immigrants from five to three years in both Trinidad and Guyana. The final major change in the system came in the late 1890s, when after 1895-96 new immigrants had to pay a part of the return passage to India, which in earlier years had been free.[22]

The Home Government, the Colonial Office, and the colonial state played a very significant part in developing, controlling, and monitoring the whole system of labor recruitment in India, the process of immigration, and the subsequent living conditions of the indentured laborers on

the plantations. The recruitment machinery set up in India was a hierarchical pyramid with the Emigration Agent General at the top and the arkatti (sub recruiting agent) at the bottom. The entire process of recruitment was managed, from the sub-agent to the Emigration Agent General, almost completely by males, the only exception was the presence of a few female recruiting agents (the sardars). Even the surgeon at the recruiting depots who examined all the laborers brought in for emigration overseas was male. The overwhelming presence of males at every level of the recruitment apparatus, from legislative and executive authority of the state and its officiating members to the recruiter at the field level, made the politics and dynamic of gender and patriarchy particularly ubiquitous in the recruitment of female labor.

While some laborers came from regions like the Madras Presidency, Bengal, Central India and Orissa, the bulk of the workers were recruited from Bihar, North West Provinces and Awadh. The tables listed below show that this was true for both male and female migrants

Table 2.1 Areas from where emigrants migrated to Trinidad (1876-1892)

	Trinidad		
Province	Female	Male	Total
Orissa	16	41	57
West Bengal	235	255	490
Cent. Bengal	144	120	264
East Bengal	5	49	54
Bihar	2,207	4,651	6,858

continued next page

Table 2.1 Contd.

Province	Trinidad		
	Female	Male	Total
N.W. Provs.	6,900	13,381	20,281
Awadh	2,272	5,822	8,094
Cent. India	165	230	395
Punjab	123	614	737
Nepal & Native States	65	158	223
Bombay, Madras	171	367	538
Total	12,303	25,688	37,991

Table 2.2 Areas from where emigrants migrated to Guyana (1876-1892)

Provinces	Guyana		
	Female	Male	Total
Orissa	9	57	66
West Bengal	417	536	953
Cent. Bengal	180	243	423
East Bengal	13	65	78
Bihar	4,011	7,511	11,522
N.W. Provs.	11,564	24,054	35,618
Awadh	3,814	10,269	14,083
C. India	239	491	730
Punjab	186	832	1,018
Nepal & Native States	112	532	420
Bombay, Madras	514	975	1,489
Total	21,059	45,453	66,512

Source: Tables 2.1 and 2.2 compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, (1876-1892).

Annual returns of the areas from where workers migrated are irregular, but the two periods - 1876 to 1892 and 1908 to 1917 show similar trends. While the provinces in these two periods were subject to territorial and nomenclature changes due to annexation to the British empire or administrative reorganization, the approximate regions from which migrants continued to be recruited remained the same.

Table 2.3 Areas from where emigrants migrated to Trinidad (1908-1917)

	Trinidad		
Provinces	Females	Males	Total
Bengal	17	36	53
East Bengal and Assam	2	3	5
Bihar and Orissa	484	842	1,326
United Provs. of Agra and Awadh	4,008	8,975	12,983
Central Provinces	7	31	38
Central India	54	179	233
Ajmere	11	37	48
Punjab	48	168	216
Native Sts.	185	658	843
Bombay and Madras	10	39	49
Other Places	2	1	3
Total	4,828	10,969	15,797

Table 2.4 Areas from where emigrants migrated to Guyana (1908-1917)

	Guyana		
Provinces	Females	Males	Total
Bengal	5	13	18
East Bengal and Assam	2	3	5
Bihar and Orissa	283	454	737
United Provs. of Agra and Awadh	3,534	8,250	11,784
Central Provinces	50	59	109
Central India	97	203	300
Ajmere	5	22	27
Punjab	51	209	260
Native Sts.	131	414	545
Bombay and Madras	10	53	63
Other Places	----	1	1
Total	4,168	9,681	13,849

Source: Tables 2.3 and 2.4 compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, (1908-1917).

From the above tables it is clear that approximately 92 percent of the female working force in the period between 1876 and 1892 were from the regions of Bihar, North West Provinces and Awadh. Figures for Guyana reflect the same pattern as Trinidad where 92 percent of the total female indentured migration came from the aforementioned regions of India. In the period between 1908 and 1917, 83 percent of those migrating to Trinidad in these years came from United Provinces, which was the erstwhile region of Awadh and parts of the North Western Provinces. In Guyana too, the numbers were similar where approximately 84.8 percent of the total female immigrants in the period between 1908 and 1917 came from the United Provinces and Agra. These trends in the regional origins were similar for male migrants too. What was it that made these regions the "labor catchment areas" for the bulk of the recruitment? In colonial contemporary imagination India was an "area of darkness", with teeming multitudes of famine and poverty stricken people waiting to migrate to better prospects, even when that meant travel overseas. As DeVerteuil observed:

> Of course under that system immigrants can be brought only from over-populated countries, such as India and China; the people are there more or less exposed to periodical famine and its consequent evils - starvation and epidemic diseases.[23]

What was the scenario in colonial India? Was India a "natural" labor catchment region of over-populated, underutilized, poor, starving people willing and ready to

migrate for work across several thousand miles of land and ocean?

A vast historiographic tradition exists which has studied the varied aspects of the nineteenth century rural colonial economy in different regions of India, namely, land holding structures, forms of rent and credit, impact of commercialization, agrarian relations of production, continuity and breaks between pre-colonial and colonial economies, and more recently, understanding ethnicity and gender in agrarian society.[24] Several revisionist studies of different regions have provided a better understanding of the complexities of the "Indian countryside" and the so called "self-sufficient village communities", laying bare the hollow and sometimes exaggerated claims of both colonialist and nationalist historiography.[25]

For our purposes, some aspects of rural life in the North West Provinces, Awadh, and Bihar are of critical importance and have a direct bearing in understanding the creation of a labor market for overseas plantations. First, as Baker shows in his study, the rural economy of South Asia leading into the nineteenth century could be divided roughly into two zones, namely, the thickly populated and well settled agricultural areas, and the sparse regions with a small population and little economic activity. The regions of Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and the Cauvery Valley in the South, were characterized by intense cultivation, high population density, and a rigid and stratified society. It

was from these regions that most migrant laborers were recruited to work in the sparsely populated regions, where by mid nineteenth plantations and mines were established under colonial economic reorganization. In the mid nineteenth century the flow of labor was channeled from the thickly populated regions to the plantations inside India and also extended to overseas migration.[26] These agrarian societies saw a dramatic and violent intrusion of colonialism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in the form of British land revenue policies, land grabbing, landlessness, landlord exploitation, debt bondage, influx of money in agrarian relations and a host of problems for the small peasant, the tenant, and the casual landless laborer. These then formed the "labor catchment areas" from where labor was channeled according to the needs of imperial capital, both domestically and internationally.

Second, other scholars have shown that there had long existed internal migration.[27] What was new in the mid nineteenth century and of immense significance for our purposes, was that the large-scale movements of labor that took place in this period, of which Trinidad and Guyana were consumers as well, was controlled by mechanisms of British colonial policy, and the mediation, often times coercive, of middlemen (the sardars and arkattis). Women and men workers from agricultural regions were familiar with the idea of moving from place to place for work, but rural to rural movement was largely unmediated and temporary. The movement

from rural to urban to overseas regions could happen only with the creation of an elaborate infrastructure to control and steer it purposefully to only those places where British capital interests predominated. The distress and rural dislocation generated by the impact of colonial economic policies, and the ways in which the recruitment mechanisms of the colonial state were set up induced women and men to migrate and exercise such a 'choice.' It cannot, therefore be assumed that the flow of labor was driven by the invisible and free hand of open market mechanisms, governed by the logic of demand and supply. This mode of labor recruitment was driven by a colonial, mercantile market where the imperial state through various policy and institutional mechanisms worked with private capital to channel labor to furnish its needs.

The particular trajectory of transporting labor from rural districts and small towns to overseas economies was shaped by coercion, promises, and dreams sold by the sardars and arkattis. Their methods of recruitment ranged from extreme coercive practices like kidnapping, placing prospective laborers on debt obligations, to luring them with dreams of easy life, and half-truths about plantation work patterns.[28] The dynamics of gender implicated the practices of sardars in critical ways. Women who found themselves in public spaces alone, very often became targets of the sardars, and sexual exploitation of single women was not uncommon.

The Indian Emigrant,[29] in an editorial comment in 1914 on the abuses of the system of recruitment for overseas plantations, lays particular emphasis on the abuses rampant in the recruitment of female labor. Quoting from a Miss Dudley, "the pioneer Missionary lady's" letter which appeared in India, the writer highlights the ways in which women were duped into labor recruitment depots:

> This is what she writes: "One woman told me she had quarreled with her husband in anger and ran away from her mother-in-law's house to her mother's. *A man on the road questioned her, and said he would show her the way. He took her to a depot for indentured labour.* Another woman said her husband went to work at another place. He sent word to his wife to follow him. *On her way a man said he knew her husband and that he would take her to him. This woman was taken to a depot....*An Indian girl was asked by her neighbour to go and see the Muharram festival. *Whilst there she was prevailed upon to go to a depot.* Another woman told me that she was going to a bathing ghat and *was misled by a woman to a depot.* When in the depot they are told that they cannot go till they pay for the food they have had and for other expenses. They are unable to do so.[30](my emphasis)

Both male and female sardars exercised duplicity in the recruitment of female labor. While the presence of female labor in agriculture was not uncommon, female mobility was circumscribed by entrenched practices of caste and patriarchal rules. These rules tended to be disrupted at moments of intense economic crises like famines, which could not only devastate the rural economy, but also play havoc with village society and tear families apart. On such occasions the agents had an easier time recruiting labor, particularly women, for

overseas plantations. As one British official noted, "In the evening rode to "Mullowli", from whence three young girls (sisters) had emigrated. *When starving in 1878 their father had deserted them...*"[31](my emphasis). The same official examining the recruitment patterns in several districts of Awadh and the North West Provinces, emphasized that recruitment was generally easier in times of economic crisis, like the famine of 1877-78, when he noted that thousands more flocked to the towns, bazaars, and depots looking for work.[32] However, in years when there were no large-scale economic crises likes famines, sardars often resorted to underhanded and illegal means to fulfill their labor quotas. The villagers of Azamgarh and Jaunpur say, according to this report, that "so long as they have plenty of work in the fields at home, why should they go?"[33] This was particularly true of female rural workers.

The nature of female labor recruitment becomes more suspicious when we look at the payment that was given to recruiters for every female they recruited successfully for the overseas plantations. Given the difficulty in procuring women,[34] as a means to ensure that the minimum sex ratio be maintained, the sardars received approximately seven or eight rupees per female, as opposed to six rupees per male.[35] The extra money that a sardar could earn for every female recruit may have motivated some to use suspect methods of recruitment.

The Officiating Magistrate of Allahabad, J. C. Robertson, filing the report for proceedings of a case brought to court

by one Ugnoo against Seetul, John Manasseh, and Luchmun for detaining his sister-in-law Amirtee against her will, observed in 1871:

> I consider this a most serious case; there is no doubt that in many instances women are inveigled on false pretenses to the emigration agent's houses, where they are virtually kept prisoners; when they are brought before the magistrate they are threatened with suits for expenses incurred in feeding them, or are cajoled in the manner which happened to Amirtee.[36]

In a separate communiqué to the Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of North-Western Provinces dated March 1871, Robertson commented about another similar case:

> I have every reason to believe that this is by no means an isolated case, and believe that in very many instances similar practices are resorted to. This I attribute, firstly to the fact that each recruiter has a direct motive for collecting as many people as possible by head money being given to him for each emigrant produced. The recruiters are, as a rule, by no means respectable, and are not likely to have much scruples where money is to be made....[37]

The artifice of the overseas labor recruitment system is particularly evident in the way the supply and mobility of female labor for overseas consumption was orchestrated by imperial recruitment practices. Oliver William Warner, the Emigration Agent in Calcutta who left India in 1898, testified about the desperation of the workers compelled to emigrate from the Port of Calcutta, to the Chairman Lord Sanderson of the Sanderson Committee in 1910 thus:

> *It is quite a mistaken idea to imagine that any emigrant - take an emigrant, I mean, from any agricultural district in India - willingly*

emigrates. I do not think any of them do as far as one can get into their minds. It is rather difficult to get to the bottom of a coolie's mind, but I should say none of them really want to go. They simply go because they are starving. That is the only reason.

(Chairman) Or sometimes because they have quarreled with their relatives?
(Warner) Yes, a row in the family very often is the cause of it.

(Chairman) It is only under circumstances of compulsion that they go?
(Warner)*Under compulsion*. If you see an emigrant ship leaving Calcutta, and if you watch the coolies' faces as they go on that ship, they are in fear and trembling the whole time.[38](my emphasis)

This compulsion, notwithstanding Warner's simplistic explanation as being driven largely by "starving", drove women and men out of their public (village) and private (home) spaces with which they had a sense of familiarity and belonging, to public arenas like neighboring villages or small town bazaars (market place), etc., largely unfamiliar locales, where the recruiting sardar had easy access to them. It was the sardars who articulated and controlled their movement henceforth. This movement of labor from the small town bazaar to the Calcutta and Madras depots, and ultimately to the sugar plantations overseas was one which was almost completely - from this point onwards, governed by the impulses of imperial capital interests - in this case, those of Trinidad and Guyana. Had there been an articulated "escape"[39] from economic and social privation by the women and men themselves, their movement would have been very different, ending up, in all probability, to areas closest to their native homes or at best

to areas of colonial economic activity within India itself. The channeling of the rural/rural movement to a rural/overseas movement was an imperial mechanism, developed to meet the demands of colonial capital. The only agency or 'choice' that economic and social oppression afforded to the men and women was their will to survive against all odds - even when that meant trading one form of oppression for another equally tough existence awaiting them on the sugar plantations.

If the historiography of post-slavery labor systems on plantations in the Caribbean shows the hollowness and 'artifice' of labor demands of the planter class, so also the revisionist historiography on nineteenth century agrarian India shows that the labor market, specifically the supply side, was driven largely by coercion and control. As Crispin Bates and Marina Carter argue in their study of tribal migration in India and overseas, that migration should not be analyzed without understanding the environs from which it arose. As they point out in their detailed study of migration from Central India to Mauritius:

> ...mobility was not an indicator of willingness to undertake overseas labour; it was instead often a sign of vulnerability or marginalization. Indentured recruitment did not liberate migrants from exploitative relationships - it merely replaced one mode of appropriation with another."[40]

The supply of female labor was particularly fraught with problems and was often manipulated by the mechanisms of recruitment.

Interjections of Patriarchy: Native and Imperial

Maharani, a worker who was indentured to a Trinidadian sugar plantation recalls why she ran away from home in an oral testimony collected by Kumar Mahabir in Trinidad:

> i married
> *me husband dead*
> *me breda an dem take it*
> milk boiling
> dem go want de milk to eat
> an ah cat coming to drink
> an ah hit im an de milk fall down
> i say dem go beat me
> *because i getting too much lix*
> *i say dem go beat me*
> *well i run*
> i no tell nobody i leaving
> only me modder-in-law
> ole modder-in-law
> me husband breda an dem eating
> an i left de house[41]

As Maharani remembers in this account to Mahabir, after being left a widow whose property had been taken away by her brothers-in law, she lived a day-to-day existence in perpetual fear and under control of her male in-laws in India. A seemingly small incident of the milk spilling over and the cat drinking it has her scared of being "lixed" or beaten by her brothers-in-law, and she runs away from that existence, interestingly with her mother-in-law's tacit approval. Under circumstances like the one Maharani faced, the woman often went back to her place of birth, to her own parents' house. However, in Maharani's case, as known from a different oral source,[42] her own parents were dead, and she had no extended kinship network which would take her back in their fold. She mentions that she had been married as a child by her kaka

(paternal uncle.) Presumably, she did not go back to her uncle's house. She then goes on to recount her encounter with an overseas labor recruiter, and in the interaction between the two, are interesting insights into the ways in which women like Maharani got entangled in the nets the recruiters cast which ended in the Calcutta depots. She remembers this encounter thus:

> e have a one-foot fellar
> an e sit down well
> an i gone to drink water
> an e tell me to come
> well i gone
> *e tell me not to jharay jaata*
> e cyar me
> *an dey gi me food an ting to eat*
> *...going tappu*
> *tappu may*
> *sara bara anna*[43] (my emphasis)

Maharani runs into the recruiter near the village well, where he tells her how he can get her a job "cheenee chalay" (sifting sugar) for "sara bara anna"[44] (twenty five cents), and that she would no longer have to "jharay jaata" (work on the stone-mill). Interestingly, in both the oral recountings of Maharani, she does not once mention or remember being told that she was being taken to a Trinidadian sugar plantation. Instead she does remember being given "food an ting to eat" and that she would be taken to a "tappu" (island). The recruiter paints a picture that her new work would be better than her present existence, invoking the oppressive "jaata" (stone-mill), the grinding stone for grains etc. - a symbol of unpaid work and domestic drudgery.

While macro economic crises like famines and other forms of rural dislocation intensified the movements of people looking for alternatives, social privation in the form of patriarchal oppression as felt by Maharani was also not uncommon. However, to extrapolate that women "escaped" from this privation (implicitly to a better life) is a simplistic understanding of the articulation of the recruitment and migration narrative. In previous scholarship on the history of indentureship in Trinidad and Guyana, the study of female migration has been perfunctory at best, and most studies suggest that it was primarily widows who emigrated to overseas plantations. Implicitly, and in some instances explicitly, the authors have suggested that they migrated to "escape" a life of social privation and marginalization in India.[45] Most women and men in their situation of desperation were trading one form of oppression for another and were being directed by the mechanisms of institutionalized recruitment centers to precisely those areas where British capital interests predominated. Even the limited information that colonial data on emigrants permits, suggests a history of recruitment and migration richer and more complex than the easy generalizations that are commonly made about women emigrants. Who were the women who migrated with indentured labor contracts to the plantations of Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917? The table below gives a colonial statistical estimation regarding the caste and religious identities of female migrants to Trinidad and Guyana in the period 1876 to

1917. While the "categories of castes" that the emigration official tabulators created is nowhere near either the strict and narrow traditional or contemporary colonial understanding as brahman, khastriya, vaishya, and sudra, nor the great diversity of jati or sub-caste origins, but a confusion of identities around both caste and class, these colonial statistics tell of the diversity of identities amongst emigrants.

Table 2.5 Proportion of female migrants according to caste and religion Trinidad and Guyana (1876-1892; 1908-1917)[46]

	Trinidad		Guyana	
1876-1892	Total Females	Percent of Total Females Migrants	Total Females	Percent of Total Female Migrants
Brahmin	1,439	11.70	2,375	11.21
Agriculturist	2,910	23.67	4,946	23.35
Artizan	758	6.16	1,587	7.49
Low Caste	5,094	41.43	8,479	40.04
Muslims	2,009	16.34	3,550	16.76
Christians	11	0.089	46	0.17
Total	12,293		21,173	
1908-1917	Trinidad		Guyana	
Brahmin	618	14.08	564	14.78
Agriculturist	1,021	23.26	1,052	27.58
Artizan	205	4.67	196	5.13
Low Caste	1,444	32.90	1,224	32.09
Muslims	714	16.27	776	20.34
Christians	6	0.136	2	0.052

Source: Percent rates have been compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration From the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, (1876-1892 / 1908-1917).

The above table gives a sketch of the social origins of the female workers who emigrated to Trinidad and Guyana in the period between 1876 and 1892 and between 1908 and 1917, showing that an entire spectrum of caste and religious

backgrounds were represented among the female migrants traveling to Guyana and Trinidad. The bulk of the female indentureds who went to Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917 were Hindus, but the proportion of Muslims who emigrated was not insignificant. The above table for instance, indicates that Muslim women formed a larger percentage of the female population emigrating than brahmans, artisans, and Christians combined. At first glance, another interesting aspect revealed is that the majority of female migrants through the entire period were from the "low castes", castes in which traditionally women were not secluded and worked outside the home in various categories of manual labor.

This sociological data is drawn from the frozen category of "caste" as understood by British colonial sociology.[47] These figures, therefore tend to hide more than they reveal - especially in relation to social origins and identity. Colonial sociological information has to be read against the grain, for these categories do not reflect the complexities of social relations and identities. Caste identities went beyond ritual and religious hierarchy, being complicated by socio- political and economic meanings and relations of power.[48] Categories like "agriculturist" or "artisan" suggest a gamut of socio-economic meanings, relations of power, and identities. Under a broad and imprecise grouping like "agriculturist" might fall a range of different class origins, implying not only different relations of power, but also different social and cultural practices. The classes

which could fall under this category could span the entire spectrum of rural social structure - from the poor peasant, the landless or tenant laborer to even the landlord. Further, women belonging to other religions like Islam or Christianity could also be "agriculturists" or "artisans".

Colonial statistics show that approximately 69 percent of the female indentureds to Trinidad and 63 percent to Guyana came from the "agriculturist" and "low caste" categories.[49] On deconstructing the categories, a whole gamut of sociological and economic meanings and values are revealed. At the simplest level, here is a classic example of colonial knowledge privileging the 'scriptural' understanding of caste as a classical four <u>varna</u> division - hence the four "Brahman", "agriculturist", "artisan", "low caste".[50] Yet, the reality was more complex than this reification of caste as classical hierarchy. Are we to understand the term "agriculturist" as those members who were related to agricultural activity in some form? Obviously, that cannot be so, since rural class implications suggest that the landlord, the small peasant, the tenant, and the landless need not, and in fact, in most instances did not, belong to the same caste called "agriculturist". "Low caste" similarly is fraught with tension and cannot be easily reconciled to a particular type of work, class location or ritual and social status.

What then do we make of colonial sociological information of which there is no dearth, and at times,

especially if read with caution and qualification, can reveal interesting details? For the purposes of explaining the implications of the practices of patriarchy and the emergent social relations in the regions of India from where female labor migrated, we need to keep in mind that the women's social identities were embedded with layered meaning and practice, rather than rigid and frozen. Even those who migrated as widows belonged to different castes, classes, and religious practices, thereby feeling the impact of patriarchy in radically different ways. Thus, for instance, the experiential impact of patriarchal oppression, or the social and ritual obligations and observances that a widow in mid-nineteenth century India faced, would be as critically influenced by her location on the caste and class hierarchy as her religious affiliation. So, while the Brahman widow and the widow of other upper castes who imitated Brahmanic practices could never remarry and her ritual and familial status would be marginalized and frozen for her lifetime, a lower caste widow could be forced to marry an eligible man, preferably the younger brother of her dead husband, to keep property within the paternal fold.[51] Generally then, in late nineteenth century India, type of female work and female mobility was critically influenced by social identity - an identity which was fraught with the tensions of caste, class, religion, language, and regional identities.

In the period between the 1840s and the 1880s, the majority of females who were recruited for the sugar

plantations were single women migrating alone or with children. In the early years, when migration overseas was still a relatively new phenomena, there was great unwillingness and reticence about going abroad for work. Villagers were particularly suspicious of recruiting sardars. As Pitcher observes in his 1882 report on the recruitment process in Awadh and the North West Provinces:

> Prag Singh seemed familiar enough with 'emigration'; said it was only dread of the unknown which deterred people from the journey, coupled with which was a general impression that emigrants became 'bedharam'[52] from being forced to eat out of one dish on board ship, along with people of other castes, and also that on arrival at the colonies they were forcibly converted to Christianity.[53]

During the entire period of indentured immigration, the percentage of recruits for overseas labor from the total population of India remained small. In circumstances of extreme poverty it was primarily men who were willing to migrate, but they went without their families, hoping to return with some savings. The percentage of married women was significantly lower in the early years of the emigration scheme, particularly in the period from 1845 to 1886 when it fluctuated between 25.57 percent to 35.98 percent of the total female population emigrating to Trinidad and Guyana. However, during the next five years the percentage of married women rose quite dramatically to a yearly average of approximately 74 percent.[54] By the 1890s, the system of recruitment had matured to a steady and regular operation, and was a familiar enough institution in the regions from

where the bulk of the laborers were recruited. There was greater communication between laborers on the plantations of Trinidad and Guyana and their families back in India. Some ex-indentureds returned to Trinidad and Guyana with their families on new contracts of labor. There are several such instances of reindentures reported by Pitcher in his report. One curious case noted by him was that of a kahar woman who returned to India with some four thousand rupees and substantial jewelry and re-emigrated, taking with her some nineteen other women.[55] Mostly, however, the laborers took their extended family back to the plantations.

More important, however, than such instances of individual whims, was the shift in opinion amongst the officials and observers of the indentureship system. By the 1890s it was felt that encouragement should be given to the ex-indentureds to stay in Trinidad or Guyana and become permanent colonists in their new homes. Their settlement would ensure for the planters a local source of labor. The long term benefits of encouraging families to settle down, would include, among other things, the reproduction of labor. It was also strongly felt by almost all official and non-official observers of the system that encouraging families to migrate would help to reduce social tensions that were then rampant on the plantations. The social unrest and tension, in the opinion of the officials was largely due to unequal numbers of men and women laborers on the plantations, and the presence of single women in the midst of large numbers of

unattached men.[56] Despite changes in policy, single women continued, throughout the period under review, to migrate as indentured contract workers. Whether single, or accompanied by spouses, the one overriding bond between all women migrating was that they all signed contracts of work which bound them to plantations and fixed their primary identity as that of indentured workers rather than as "wives", "mistresses" or "unattached" women. In the seventeen year period between 1876 and 1892, 12,303 females out of a total of 37,991 emigrants went to Trinidad. The proportion of females to males in this period was approximately 47.9 percent. In Guyana, in the same period, 21,059 females out of a total of 66,512 workers emigrated. The proportion of female workers to males was 46.3 percent. In the later period, between 1908 and 1917, the proportion of females to males in Trinidad was approximately 44 percent and for Guyana it was 43 percent.[57]

These statistics, complicate the history of female recruitment in significant ways. We need to retrieve women's voices from the canons of colonial sociological knowledge, keeping in mind the serious limitations of such data. The women's status is dually marginalized as workers and as women, reinforcing their silence and hiding them from official documents, and from history generally. Their exploitative status, both as rural workers (located on the lower configuration of class society), and as women (located on the margins, but feeling the centrality of the practices

of patriarchy), has to be reclaimed by reading in these sources not only what they highlight, but also their silences. One has to read these sources necessarily against the grain, fully cognizant of their colonial complicity in creating a frozen "other".

What this limited sociological data does reveal, is that women who were transported overseas as laborers were not all widows, but came from diverse caste and religious backgrounds. They were single as well as married women, and even when they came with their spouses, were required to sign separate contracts of labor. Further, the bulk of the female population emigrating to Trinidad and Guyana came from "low caste", - castes in which traditionally both women and men worked to earn their livelihoods. The majority of women who went as indentured labor were workers belonging primarily to the categories of "agriculturists" or "low castes" who experienced economic dislocation under British colonial expansion in the same manner that male migrants experienced it.

Two forms of patriarchal politics complicated the recruitment of female labor. The official British notions of the need to send the "right kind" of women to the plantations, especially as over the years, social problems like the high incidence of "wife murders" became common in the immigrant Indian working class ethos on plantations. Moral questions rather than the value of female labor for the sugar economy, took precedence in formulating recruitment

strategies for female emigrants. Indian women, who migrated as indentured labor, got cast into British, Victorian essentialist molds as being morally of "loose" behavior, thereby responsible for the crimes against them. The official and non-official observers of indentured immigrant labor, identifying women's sexual mores and behavior as the chief reasons for social problems amongst workers on plantations, urged that the recruitment of women in India be redressed so as to bring in more "tractable", preferably upper caste females, who would by their morality and "womanly virtues", keep social unrest at bay on the plantations. Contemporary Victorian patriarchal vision of what constitutes a "good woman" critically influenced the gendered ways in which policy toward female labor emigration from India was conducted. In the recruitment of women, less was made of their worth as workers[58] and a great deal of effort was expended, both by policy makers and the recruiters, to transport women who would, in their eyes, be "good wives and mothers", and who would establish social equilibrium on the plantations.

Duncan Pitcher, a British official who traveled in the districts from which most of the laborers emigrated, reaffirmed this view. According to him, "No married women ever offer themselves for registration who have not gone wrong unless they be widows."[59] The McNeill Lal report of 1915, in a review of the history of the indentureship system operating in Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917,

confirms that "the women who came out consist as to 1/3 of married women who accompany their husbands, the remainder being mostly widows and women who have run away from their husbands or have been put away by them. "The single women who migrated thus were characterized by McNeill and Lal as those "who got into trouble" and apparently migrated to "escape from the life of promiscuous prostitution which seems to be the alternative to emigration."[60]

There is much discussion of the character of the women migrants in the annual immigration reports. There were frequent references to "who" or more specifically "what type" of women were migrating. While little was discussed in terms of who the men were except that they should be useful labor on the plantations, when it came to women, issues of morality, their sexual and social behavior came in for close scrutiny by the immigration bureaucracy. In an official despatch in 1885 to the Colonial Secretary, explaining the suicide of a woman named Bhugwandie, the Protector of Immigrants had this to say: "The fact that Bhugwandie was of the Bramon (sic) caste and embarked alone at Calcutta shows that she must have been a widow or have left her husband and does not say much in favor of her private character."[61] In these narratives, any woman, single and unattached, willing to migrate was viewed suspiciously, and very "naturally" could either be a prostitute or from the "low class". Low class in colonial writings had a strong moral undertone of colonial disdain for the "native", particularly the female

"native". As one official observed, "...single women...forming...some of the lowest caste of emigrants... who have lost their caste, by which all ties of relationship and home are severed, and having neither religion nor education to restrain them from falling into the depth of degradation and vice."[62] These perceptions -- inevitably, patriarchal and colonial, were to color the discourse right through the period and would influence to a great degree the forms of social control that would be laid out for the Indian immigrant women.

Clearly then, with such patriarchal perceptions, laws and methods of recruitment of the indentured laborers were also divided along gender lines. The Indian Act No. 13 of 1864 which was one of the many to regulate emigration overseas from India, laid down that it was the duty of the magistrate to ensure that no one was forced to migrate and that all should be made aware of the nature of the work engagement in the plantations overseas. In the case of women, the recruiting sardar and the emigration agent had the added responsibility of getting the approval of their husbands or fathers, and only if "no one claimed her," could she be allowed to emigrate.[63] No doubt the law was not strictly adhered to at all times, as is evidenced by the incidence of coercion and kidnapping that has been discussed earlier. In the eyes of the colonial state, women were equated with children and not perceived as adults.

From the early 1840s, regular reports regarding the frequent use of coercive and deceptive methods to recruit

female labor came in for official perusal, necessitating stronger control over the activities of the recruiting agents (the sardars). After 1864 it became necessary for all agents to register their labor recruits with the local district magistrates who were given the responsibility of checking the antecedents of the workers and of informing them accurately about the work obligations on the plantations. In the case of female recruits, the magistrate was to register only those who could provide proof of family approval of their impending emigration overseas, or those who were alone or single and not "claimed" by either husband, brother or father.

The primary purpose of Duncan Pitcher's investigation was to streamline the system and make the machinery of recruitment more effective. He was to highlight problem districts, the practices of the local officials in charge of recruitment and also gauge popular opinions in the villages and districts regarding emigration overseas. Pitcher while examining the emigration registers of the local magistrates in 1881, found this interesting entry regarding the procedure of registering female emigrant labor:

> According to an emigration register - "the women from Aligarh cut out"- the woman above alluded to was a Bhat and had two small children with her aged seven and two and a half. *After nearly a month she was allowed to emigrate, on the Magistrate of Aligarh reporting that no one claimed her.*[64] (my emphasis)

Another important part of his assignment was to ascertain the most sensitive (to patriarchal concerns of the villages,

rather than to women) ways in which women could be recruited for overseas labor. One of the recommendations suggested by Pitcher to encourage easier recruitment of female labor, and also in his view, a step that would facilitate the recruitment of women of "better character", was the idea of employing female recruiters for the task. The female relatives of the recruiting agents often assisted them in the task of soliciting female laborers. Pitcher suggested regular and formal appointment of female recruiting agents to aid in the process.

The recruiting patterns differed, to some extent, from district to district, depending to a degree on "hakim-ke-mizaj" or on the goodwill of the local magistrates. This was particularly relevant to the recruitment and registration of female labor. Sardars and depot managers complained that some local Indian magistrates who harbored "native" biases against women traveling overseas, convinced women brought in by the sardars for registration to go back to their villages and families. Pitcher, testifying before the Sanderson Committee in 1909 recalled the problems that recruiters faced regarding women:

> There is so much difficulty in the district up country in allowing women to go; the recruiters were interfered with. Then at registration, if registration went on before a native magistrate religious prejudices came in so many cases. I found a few who were straight, but in other cases men allowed their religious prejudice against natives crossing the sea to come in, and particularly in the case of the women.[65]

In this connection, therefore, Pitcher strongly recommended that registration be transferred to the medical officers who were all Europeans. This had been suggested by him in 1882 as well, but it seems to have not been successfully implemented, by his admission, years later to the Sanderson Committee. The conflicting interests of the local district officials like those of the magistrates on the one side and the recruiters on the other was significant enough to be noticed and commented upon by the local newspaper Demerara Daily Chronicle of Guyana in 1882 thus, "Another objection was that the local government had the option of dismissing the servant of another colony at its will, without any appeal. They could, at will, dismiss him from the exercise of his power as a recruiter. ...Any magistrate could disqualify or dismiss a man from recruiting in a district."[66] Recruiters and local officials clashed often over the recruitment procedures, particularly in the case of female labor recruitment.

Recruiting women laborers for the overseas sugar plantations remained a thorny issue for the immigration authorities in India right from 1845 until the abolition of indentureship in 1917. The constant dilemma immigration officials faced was how to recruit a greater proportion of women workers for migration to Trinidad and Guyana from the very small pool of women that was available in India for migration.[67] At no point in the entire period of the operation of the indentured migration of labor from India to the Caribbean, did the authorities ever seek to abolish the

recruitment of women workers. On the contrary, between 1845 and 1917, the need to raise the proportion of women to men migrants came up for official consideration with some frequency.[68]

Although it would be an overstatement to suggest that British imperial administrators carved out a clear and separate policy for the recruitment of female labor in India, the dynamics of the process reflected the patriarchal biases of British officialdom. The debates amongst colonial administrators and official observers of the indenture system, when dealing with females, reverberated often on three themes, namely, the feasibility of maintaining a minimum ratio of women migrating to plantations, the moral character of female migrants, and the need to ensure that females who migrated, did so with the permission of their families. Female emigrant labor, in the view of concerned colonial officials was to serve the purpose of not only providing labor to plantations, but also to stabilize social relations and to create a community of immigrant workers in Trinidad and Guyana. The importance of recruiting the "right" kind of women, whose presence on plantations would encourage the formation of secure family life amongst indentured workers, and the significance of reproduction of labor for the long-term labor arrangements on plantations was not promoted or encouraged at the beginning of indentured emigration from India. This realization dawned on British officialdom, several years into the indentureship system, when reports of high incidence of violence against

women and general instability of social relations between Indian men and women on plantations started making news.

The unequal ratio of women migrating and the character of women migrants came in for close observation and comment. Successive inquiry committees set up to look into the working of the indenture system made recommendations on these aspects of female labor. Their value as laborers was never questioned and did not become as hotly a debated issue, as did their presence in smaller numbers, and more significantly, their character, morality, and sexual behavior. Mr. William M. Campbell, chairman of the West India Committee on behalf of the sugar interests in the West Indies had this to say about the lesser numbers of women coming to the West Indies as indentureds:

> it would be a very great thing if we could have in more women, but that has always been a very difficult subject with the Indian government, and I think they are right, too, because they have to take care that women are not imported from India into the colonies simply for immoral purposes. If somehow or other we could bring in more women, no matter what the cost would be in providing supervision, it would be a very good thing for the colony and a very good thing for the men; and I do not think, judging from my own views, that proprietors would hesitate to spend more money in doing so, because it is only right, and it is natural, and, of course, in the far future it will be a benefit to the colony.[69]

This optimistic hope of bringing in more women to the sugar plantations was not shared by those who operated in the field of recruitment as evidenced by some of the problems they faced in recruiting women. By the late 1880s, female labor

recruitment had become a contentious issue between the different colonial governments involved in its operation. No longer was the concern of emigration and immigration officials of India, Trinidad, and Guyana solely to channelize labor from India to the plantations. As the indentured labor system took roots in the preceding fifty years, the presence of females started eventually to be seen as critical in shaping a stable social environment on the plantations, and integral to fostering a community of workers capable of reproducing labor, to ensure for the planters a regular supply of labor. By the 1890s, some of those involved with the West India sugar interests as well as observers of the indentureship system felt that the only way to create social stability amongst the Indian indentured workers would be to recruit a "better class" of women. This could be achieved by reducing the terms of indenture for female recruits or even abolishing it completely.

The terms of indentured contracts of labor for the female immigrants was reduced from five to three years by Ordinance 16 of 1894.[70] This, according to some observers, would encourage families and women from "upper castes" to migrate. William Morrison, overseer, manager and part proprietor of sugar estates in Guyana went further by suggesting to the Sanderson Committee in 1909 that it abolish the system of indentureship for females:

> The women we get from India are not of the finest class, they are bad enough. I think we should get better men if the women were not indentured. In any country you like, if a man

> were told that his wife would be indentured and have to work everyday and all that, he would think twice before going to that country; whereas if he were a good working man himself he would be quite pleased if his wife came to the country to cook for him and work if she liked. I have often found that when women were indentured, they worked much better when they became free.[71]

This suggestion, however, was not translated into law until the end of the entire system in 1917, when indentured emigration of both males and females was abolished.

The second critical force in the recruitment and flow of female labor from rural to overseas plantations was the differing practices of "native" Indian patriarchy. Rules of purity and pollution, ritual and social strictures, control on female work and mobility were critically determined by the women's location in the caste/class hierarchy. This determined not only the ways in which women were recruited for the overseas labor market, but also which women would be most likely to find themselves in the recruitment centers.

Rural society in the regions of India from where the laborers migrated to Trinidad and Guyana, was not a passive countryside of self-sustaining communities, but rather an area of intense struggle for survival, highly stratified and competitive, and entrenched in differing practices of patriarchy. In this severe competition and scrambling over resources for basic survival, it was inevitably women and men situated at the bottom rungs of caste/class society who lost the battle, and migrated elsewhere looking for the means of survival. In this story of colonial dislocation, what has

been overlooked is the gendered impact of rural poverty. Rural (of tenant, landless and small peasant class) women, felt the double marginalization of economic dislocation and social practices of patriarchy. Thus, while the nature of patriarchal oppression differed according to caste and class location, the control and hegemonic influence of the differing practices of patriarchy remained entrenched. The women, feeling economic dislocation and/or social oppression, wandering off to look for an alternative livelihood, almost always found themselves in the clutches of recruiting sardars (both women and men), who appropriated their labor with half truths and sometimes outright lies. Gender politics critically marked this flow of labor. The recruiting agents, some of whom were women, faced the dilemma of requiring by law to recruit a fixed minimum ratio of women for every shipload of laborers sent out to the plantations from a pool of female labor that was restricted by patriarchal strictures on female mobility. Such strictures on female mobility, especially amongst the upper castes, made deception and force an attractive entrapment tool for the recruiting sardar who was under pressure to fulfill the minimum ratio of female labor. There was also always the attraction of getting a higher price per female head than male. Women would often be kept by recruiters on false pretenses, such as promises of taking them to places of pilgrimages. While in the case of male labor recruitment, the complaint most frequently heard was that they were given false promises of what kind of wages

they would earn, or where they were being taken, in the case of female recruitment, dangers of sexual exploitation were never far away. Pitcher, on his tour of the North Western Provinces, while examining the system of recruitment encountered a group of women, who had no idea that they were going to be sent away as "coolie" labor. They had been forced to live with the men, when all they had wanted was to go to places of pilgrimage. Such forms of duplicity and sexual exploitation were quite rampant. Pitcher's Diary notes this incident thus:

> ...Found about half a dozen more women who rushed into an inner room, and were said to be (in) "purdah".... *They say that they were not coolies, but were kept by various men living in the house,* and Nizam Ali admitted that one of them had a child with her who was suffering from small pox....Muttra full of women who beg their way here on pilgrimage to Brindavan and frequent the numerous "Sadha Bharat."[72](my emphasis)

Apart from such forms of exploitation practiced by Indian agents, this process was complicated by the intervention of male relatives and Indian officials such as local magistrates, who were always unwilling to allow females to migrate, even in cases where the females themselves wanted to leave. Pitcher's diary mentions several such cases, where women who were willing to go, and were not being coerced by any agents, faced the handicaps which no prospective male migrant faced - that of patriarchal disapproval of such exhibitions of "independence" by the women. Litigation was sometimes resorted to when the woman refused to comply with the wishes of her

family, but such cases seem to have been rare. For the male emigrant, the shame was, at best, the loss of his personal status in his caste brotherhood, but for the female, it was not merely loss of caste, but her disappearance or emigration cast a shadow of shame over the entire family. A family that could not protect its women from the corrupting influences of the outside world, was one which could not aspire to hold on to its good name. This tendency to "protect" their women and restrict their mobility was the defining and distinguishing mark of the upper castes from the lower ones, who could not afford to shelter their women as well. Women in these castes worked alongside men, and had greater mobility. This is not to suggest that their position was in any way enviable, for they felt the burdens of poverty and patriarchy in ways different from their upper caste sisters. In the early years of the indentured emigration from India, articulation of Indian patriarchal disapproval of females traveling manifested in cases of individual families or male heads of household like father, or husband bringing in complaints against such emigration.

It was only with the rise of nationalist rhetoric in the early decades of the twentieth century that this disapproval became a popular platform against the British Raj. Different associations sent petitions to the government detailing the disastrous effects that occurred with such recruitment. The Marwari Association's representation to the government of

Bengal is a case in point of the patriarchal concerns of Indian men about female emigration:

> Women are decoyed as freely and with as much unconcern as men and registered as single, although women are never single in this country unless they be widows. The object of registering them as such is evidently to show that they are free to act for themselves. But *it is a well-known fact that women in this country are seldom free and are always under the guardianship of either their husbands or other relations*....Houses and families are broken up when the bread winners are spirited away. *The social stigma which the sudden and clandestine disappearance of a female member brings is hard to efface.*[73](my emphasis)

Prominent leaders of the nationalist movements arising in different parts of the country like Sarojini Naidu, Madan Mohan Malviya, and C.F. Andrews drew attention to the abhorrent practices of the emigration of indentured labor to Britain's different colonies. The nationalist rhetoric of disapproval was couched in interesting terms. Thus, the popular ire against the system was seen as "*slavery* of Indian men and the *prostitution* of Indian women." (my emphasis.) On nationalist platforms, leaders urged the people of India to do their patriotic duty by avenging the "dishonor" that women emigrants suffered under this system. The language of nationalist rhetoric was the patriarchal concern of defending the "honor" of "our women" against their, that is, British imperial tyranny.[74]

The history of female emigration from India to Trinidad and Guyana shows that both the imperial construction of the labor market and the different patriarchal biases of British

and Indian officials implicated the flow of female labor in important ways, where it became "easier" for some females to migrate than others. Further, a sketch of the social identities of female migrants historicizes their diversity, making easy generalizations of "escape" from widowhood or unhappy marriages a limiting narrative of this complex migration. It reveals a richness far more important than the fact of unequal proportions of females to males, or that they formed insignificant numbers on ships and plantations. British official concerns and policy adjustments, Indian patriarchal objections, and the ensuing debates on the question of female emigration, suggests that female workers were not seen merely as head counts of labor for plantations, but necessary for social stability as well.

Notes

[1]Duncan Pitcher, Diary of Tour in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh While on Special Duty in Connection With Emigration to the Colonies From British India (henceforth Diary) (Calcutta, 1882), p. 65.

[2]Partha Chatterjee, Nation and its Fragments (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 31 and pp. 14-34.

[3] For a view that suggests that the influence of patriarchal practices varies significantly across caste, class, regions and communities in India see Kalpana Bardhan, "Social Classes and Gender in India: the structure of differences in the condition of women," in Gender and Political Economy - Explorations of South Asian Systems, ed. Alice W. Clark (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 146-178. For some studies on gender and patriarchy in colonial India see Rosalind O' Hanlon, A Comparison between Men and Women: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Mrinalini Sinha, Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995); Meredith Borthwick, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal (1849-1905) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Prem Chowdhry, The Veiled Women: shifting gender equations in rural Haryana, 1880-1990 (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). For a comprehensive general history of women in India from the colonial period to post independence see Geraldine Forbes, Women in Modern India, The New Cambridge History of India, ed. Gordon Johnson, Vol.IV.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[4]This has been adequately addressed in works on indentureship. The reasons that have been discussed at some length have been primarily the macro and micro social and economic conditions which facilitated migration overseas. Thus, famines, dislocation under colonial economic arrangements, destruction of traditional livelihoods (e.g. handicrafts) etc., loss of lands under excessive colonial extraction of revenues are some important conditions that have been cited for this migration.

[5]The total number of indentured laborers introduced from India to Guyana in the period 1838-1918 was 238,909. For Trinidad the number of indentureds introduced from India in the same period was 143,939. Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p. 276.

[6]By emphasizing this, I am not suggesting that earlier histories of indenture have made any such crude generalization when discussing the reasons for traveling overseas. I am merely suggesting that in understanding the "recruitment process", one needs to ask more questions. This then enables us to deconstruct the process itself, getting away from the polemic of "coercion-choice" or "push-pull" factors, to the ways in which this labor movement got created and articulated.

[7]I employ the term 'artifice' to emphasize not only the colonial, mercantile nature of the labor market, but also that the workers who

formed the "supply side," neither exercised deliberated choice nor were 'free' agents in the migration process.

[8]Discussions of the planters' panic anticipating flight of the freed slaves and on their inherent "lazy" characters are found in almost all contemporary publications. See Barton Premium, Eight Years in British Guiana, 1840-1848 (London: Longmans, 1850); John Davy, The West Indies before and since Slave Emancipation (London: W. & F. G. Cash, 1854; reprint, London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1971); L.A.A. De Verteuil, Trinidad: Its Geography, Natural Resources, Administration, Present Condition and Prospects 2nd. ed. (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1884).

[9]Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp. 53-54. Also see Madhavi Kale, "Projecting Identities: Empire and Indentured Labor Migration from India to Trinidad and British Guiana, 1836-1885" in Nation And Migration, ed. Peter Van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 74-80.

[10]Experiments in different forms of labor recruitment and supply characterized this period. The classic Indian indentureship system, whereby labor was brought with contracts for five years got regulated by the Laws of Indenture of 1854, and finally fixed by 1862. As Look Lai in a detailed discussion of the evolution of the system of indentureship contracts for both Indian and Chinese labor points out: "The final introduction of the five-year contract of indenture, binding the migrant laborer to a specific plantation for a full term of five years at an official rate of daily wages...did not take place until 1862, a full twenty-four years after the first Asian laborers made their appearance on the Demerara plantations(the 396 "Gladstone Coolies" of 1838)." For a discussion of the organization of the British West Indian Indenture System, see Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp. 50-86.

[11]Drawing from official reports of the period, John Davy commenting on the state of the sugar economy in Guyana and Trinidad quotes the following statistics: In Guyana the total exports of sugar, rum and molasses fell from 66,136 hogsheads to 37,351 hogsheads in 1850. Trinidad, according to Davy, faced a similar crisis, amounting to a loss of at least 1,000,000 sterling pound of British capital since 1838. Davy, The West Indies, pp. 322-323 and pp. 352-353.

Average annual sugar production in Trinidad fell from 15,227 tons in the years 1834-38, to 15,000 ton in the period 1839-46. Similarly in Guyana, the average annual production fell from 51,278 tons in 1834-38 to 31,865 tons between 1839-46. Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p. 273.

[12]David Lowenthal, West Indian Societies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 57.

[13]Davy, The West Indies, p.317.

[14]Ibid., p.358.

[15]Brereton, A History of Modern Trinidad, p.81.

[16]On being asked in 1909 by the Sanderson Committee inquiring about the effect that the presence of indentured Indian laborers had on wages for all laboring classes in Trinidad, Cyrus Prudhomme David, a member of the Legislative Council of Trinidad, had this to say: "I think the competition of the indentured immigration is sufficient to keep down the rate of wages, because as long as the employer has upon his estate a sufficient number of indentured immigrants, he is able to command the labor market, so to say, and he offers to the free laborer whatever wages he likes, because to a certain extent the free laborer is bound to work." (Gt. Britain Parliamentary Papers, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94) (1910) Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates (the Sanderson Commission), (henceforth the Sanderson Committee Report.), Evidence of Cyrus Prudhomme David, p. 193).

[17]Premium, Eight Years, p.12.

[18]Ibid., p. 17.

[19]Ibid., pp. 205-206.

[20]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

[21]De Verteuil, Trinidad, p.340.

[22]Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp. 56-59.

[23]De Verteuil, Trinidad, p.349.

[24]The historiography on rural society in India in the nineteenth century is too vast to be cited here individually. However, a good place to start is the excellent review of scholarship on different aspects of rural society by Gyan Prakash, "The History and Historiography of rural laborers in Colonial India," in The World of the Rural Laborer in Colonial India, ed. Gyan Prakash (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 1-46.

[25]Charles Metcalfe was the first to formulate the concept of self-sufficient and unchanging village communities for eighteenth and nineteenth century rural society in India. This idyllic representation of villages as self-sustaining economies continued to be advanced by subsequent European writers on India from Karl Marx to Henry Maine. This myth has been subsequently shattered in the numerous monographs on pre-colonial and colonial rural society. For more on this, see M. N.. Srinivas and A.M. Shah, "The Myth of the Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village." Economic Weekly 12 (1960): 1375-78.

[26]Christopher Baker, "Economic Reorganization and the Slump in South and Southeast Asia" Comparative Studies in Society and History 23, no.3 (July 1981): 325-349.

[27]For studies on internal migration see Prabhu Prasad Mohapatra, "Coolies and Colliers: A Study in the Agrarian Context of Labour Migration from Chota Nagpur, 1880-1920," Studies in History (New Series) 1, no. 2 (1985): 247-303; D. Rothermund, "A Survey of Rural Migration

and Land Reclamation in India, 1885," Journal of Peasant Studies 4 (1977): 230-42; Anand Yang, "Peasants on the Move: A Study of Internal Migration in India," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 10 (1979): 37-58.

[28]Several Annual Reports on Emigration from Calcutta discuss the methods employed by the recruiters to enlist labor for overseas plantations. For devious means employed like debt etc. see also C.O. 318/264. 1871.

[29]This was a monthly journal which came out of Madras in South India, and was launched in 1914. The editorial of volume one, number two issue, laid out the aims and objectives of the journal. It was the aim of the journal, among other things, "to discourage and put a stop, by organised work, to the system of 'indentured labour' of Indians to foreign countries....(Also) to report in general the working and doings of our fellow countrymen abroad and to bring about a closer and more intimate acquaintance with them." The Indian Emigrant 1, no. 2 (Sept. 1914).

[30]Ibid., p.359.

[31]Pitcher, Diary, p. 70.

[32]Ibid., pp. 69-71.

[33]Ibid., p.89

[34]In several Annual Reports on Emigration from the Ports of Calcutta and Madras, the agents frequently complained of the difficulty in procuring the required number of females to emigrate overseas on contracts of labor. While the men preferred to travel without their families in the hope of returning soon, the females were restricted, especially upper caste women by caste strictures on their mobility and a strict control of the patriarchal household.

[35]Pitcher, Diary, p. 92.

[36]C.O. 318/264, 1871. The Report filed by J. C. Robertson, Officiating Magistrate, in the Case of Ugnoo Versus Seetul, John Manasseh, and Luchmun, under Sections 416, 343 and 109 of the Indian Penal Code.

[37]C.O. 318/264, 1871. J. C. Robertson, Officiating Magistrate, Allahabad, to the Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government, North-Western Provinces.

[38]The Sanderson Committee Report, Evidence of Mr. Oliver William Warner, Emigration Agent in Calcutta, p.29.

[39]Some scholars, prominent amongst them is P.C. Emmer, who have advanced the idea that Indian female workers through migration were able to escape either an "unhappy marriage", or the "unfortunate state of widowhood", taking rather literally the colonialist constructions of

women's identities, assuming that the women were either in bad marriages or were widows, not bona fide workers who like their male compatriots were "pushed" out by British colonial expansion which had resulted in increased landlessness and poverty by mid nineteenth century. Interestingly, Emmer does recognize that migration from India was the result of the intrusion of British expansion and their agrarian policies, but somehow the women who were recruited were additionally troubled by individualistic concerns like bad marriages or widowed status. See P.C. Emmer, "Immigration into the Caribbean: The Introduction of Chinese and East Indian Indentured Laborers Between 1839 and 1917" in European Expansion and Migration - Essays on the Intercontinental Migration from Africa, Asia, and Europe, eds. P.C. Emmer and M. Morner (New York, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1992), pp. 245-276; Also Emmer, "The Great Escape: The Migration of Female Indentured Servants from British India to Surinam, 1873-1916" in Abolition and its Aftermath ed. Richardson, pp. 245-266. Also, See P.C. Emmer ed., Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labor before and after Slavery. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martin Nijhoff, 1986).

[40]Crispin Bates and Marina Carter, "Tribal Migration in India and Beyond," in The World of the Rural Laborer, ed. Prakash, p. 242.

[41]Noor Kumar Mahabir, The Still Cry - Personal Accounts of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago During Indentureship (1845-1917) (Tacarigua, Trinidad: Calaloux Publications, 1985), p. 79. This interview of Maharani by Mahabir was recorded in creole English peculiar to the dialect of the Indian indentured laborers who came from India. It is a mix of creole (i.e. African) English and interspersed with words from Indian languages like Bhojpuri and Hindi.

[42]University of West Indies Oral History Project. Tape OP-62, #33. Interview of Maharani by Patricia Mohammed.

[43]Maharani's account in Mahabir, The Still Cry, pp. 79-80.

[44]Mahabir's translation of "sara bara anna" is twenty-five cents. He gives no explanation as to how he came to this conclusion, because literally translated, "sara bara anna" is about seventy five cents.

[45]Emmer's work as already discussed above is the clearest posturing of such a view. Rhoda Reddock, though not suggesting this implicitly, does make the point that the act of migration in and of itself was an act of freedom for the women.

[46]Also for yearly returns on caste and religious background (1876-1917) of female emigrants see Appendix A Tables 1 and 2 respectively for Trinidad and Guyana.

[47]From the early days of British colonial rule in India, British officials and observers in a bid to understand the dynamics of Indian society, made caste foundational to the formation of Indian society, reifying and essentialising the significance of caste in that society. Caste, in subsequent imperialist scholarship became "the soul and the body, not to mention the mind of India". This view achieved canonical status in Indian sociology, particularly with the publication of Louis

Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus in 1966, where Dumont characterizes the chief ideology of caste as religious and hierarchical, this being the prime-mover of society and the body politic of India. Serious revisions of such formulations have taken place. For challenges to earlier received notions of the importance of the caste system see Nicholas Dirks, "Castes of Mind", Representations 37 (Winter 1992):56-78.

[48]Nicholas Dirks makes the case for the complexity of social identity and the place of caste in it in very cogent terms. He writes: "The referents of social identity were multiple and contextually determined; temple communities, territorial groups, lineage segments, family units, royal retinues, warrior sub-castes, occupational reference groups, sectarian networks, even priestly cabals were just some of the significant units of identification, all of them at various times far more significant than uniform metonymy of endogamous "caste" groupings. Caste was just one category among many others, one way of organizing and representing identity." "Castes of Mind," pp. 59-60.

[49]See Table 2.5 in the above text for percentage breakdown of each caste category.

[50]Interestingly, this colonial classification does not follow the classic "four-Varna" terminology of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra; but makes very crude translations from supposedly ritually ascribed occupations associated with these classical four "castes". Varna loosely translates to color, but has also been traditionally used to denote the four castes.

[51]Prem Chowdhry, "Customs in a Colonial Economy: Women in Colonial Haryana" in Recasting Women, eds., Sangari and Vaid, pp. 302-336.

[52]"Bedharam" loosely translated meant a loss of one's religion.

[53]Pitcher, Diary, p.66.

[54]See Table 4 Statistics on proportion of married to single women emigrating to Trinidad and Guyana.

[55]Pitcher, Diary, p.76.

[56]Successive commissions of enquiry into the indentureship system, like D. W. D. Comin's Report on Trinidad and Guyana, Sanderson Commission Report and the McNeill Lal Report all found this to be the case.

[57]See Table 5 for proportion of female to male labor migrating to Trinidad and Guyana.

[58]This kind of typecasting was not limited to female workers alone. Employers frequently used ethnicity and race to keep their laboring classes divided. Thus, on the sugar plantation of Trinidad and Guyana, stereotypes existed about African and Indian male workers as well. The African was a strong and "brutish" worker, but difficult to

control and discipline, while the Indian worker was seen as weak and wily, but more compliant and obedient.

[59]Pitcher, Diary, p.93

[60]Great Britain Parliamentary Papers, XLVII (Cd. 7744) (1915). Report to the Government of India on the Conditions of Indian Immigrants in Four British Colonies and Surinam, by James McNeill and Chiman Lal (henceforth The McNeill Lal Report), p.313.

[61]C.O. 384/155 (1885), Protector of Immigrants to Acting Colonial Secretary.

[62]C.O. 318/245 (1865), Thornton Warner to Murdoch.

[63]C.O. 318/261 (1871), Dr. W. J. Palmer to Protector of Immigrants.

[64]Duncan Pitcher, Diary, p.65.

[65]Sanderson Committee Report, p.176. Evidence of Duncan Pitcher.

[66]Demerara Daily Chronicle, Jan. 13, 1882.

[67]Pitcher's Diary and the McNeill Lal Report discuss the difficulties of recruiting women and some of the legal ways in which women migrants could be encouraged to migrate.

[68]D. W. D. Comins, Note on the Abolition of Return Passage of Indian Immigrants from Trinidad and Demerara. (henceforth Comins' Report) (Calcutta, 1892), discussed the difficulty in recruiting a greater number of women to migrate from India, but supported the strict rules that had been laid out in the previous years that a fixed ratio of women to men be maintained while recruiting laborers to the Caribbean.
The McNeill Lal Report of 1915 recommended that the ratio of females to males be raised to 50 females for every 100 males from the earlier ratio of 40 females for every 100 males.

[69]Sanderson Committee Report, Evidence of Mr. William M. Campbell, pp.115-116.

[70]Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p.306.

[71]Sanderson Committee Report, Evidence of Mr. William Morrison, pp.111-112.

[72]Pitcher, Diary, p.104. "Sadha Bharats", according to Pitcher, were places in Benares, where food and clothings were given free at certain hours daily, and this attracted not only the poor of the city but also the recruiters. (p.89)

[73]The Marwari Association's petition to the British government in Bengal is reproduced in its entirety in The Indian Emigrant, Vol.II, No.1. August, 1915.

[74]Such sentiments resonated in the resolutions and speeches of associations and leaders of the time, from Sarojini Naidu and C.F. Andrews, to the United Province Congress resolutions. These are reproduced in various issues of The Indian Emigrant. For an analysis of the nationalist understanding and dealing with the "women's question" in this period see Chatterjee, chaps. VI and VII, "The Nation and Its Women," and "Women and the Nation," in Nation and Its Fragments, pp.116-157.

CHAPTER III

CROSSING THE *KALA PANI*[1]: EXPERIENCES ON THE MIGRATION DEPOTS AND SHIPS - A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

who time coming
the man say
gwine fuss boat
e no tell e i go chinedad you know
e signam
e no tell e dat you know
e no tell e
e no come back
e no come back
e no come back
e no greet mumma fadder again
gwine Kalapani
sath samundar pass....[2]

Bharath, a young man, left his village without telling his parents, in the company of a recruiter who promised him work with the colonial government. Bharath, under the mistaken idea that he was only going away to a nearby city like Agra or Delhi, readily agreed to go with the recruiter. Prospects of a city job must have seemed an attractive offer to a young man who had never left his village prior to this journey. Bharath, as evidenced in his oral recalling of that period of his life in India, knew nothing about going overseas to a Trinidadian sugar plantation. He remembers that he was never told he was going to "Chinedad" (Trinidad) which was "sath samundar pass" (across the seven seas), nor that he would never see his parents again. Later, in the Calcutta depot, when it became clear to him that he would be traveling overseas, he was no longer able or allowed to leave the depot so easily. The recruiting agent, in bringing him from a remote village to the big city had incurred costs of travel

and food, binding him effectively to the depot for migration. Bharath, and many hundreds of other men and women like him remained in these depots waiting for departure to unknown regions for plantation work of which most had only a vague understanding.

In this chapter I study the trials and tribulations of the long journey that the women and men undertook in ships closely reminiscent of the infamous slave ships. The journey began with the workers' compulsory residence in depots located in Calcutta and Madras and ended with their arrival on plantations in Trinidad and Guyana after a sea voyage lasting three months or more. This critical travel time has generally been overlooked in studies of migration of indentured labor.[3] Yet in many ways, this passage serves as a metaphor for understanding subsequent relations that emerged on the sugar plantations. Friendships and long-lasting relations were frequently formed between women and men on the depots and ships. Ship marriages and romances were not rare. I will study the social and gender dynamics of such unions in this chapter. Additionally, the passage was fraught with physical discomfort of narrow confined spaces and mental dilemmas of going away to the unknown. For women, more so than the men, there was an added darkness to this "middle passage" which was especially alienating and threatening. Violence in the form of sexual abuse, rape, and suicide was not unknown on the ships. In the face of such misfortunes, what strategies of survival did the women

undertake? An examination of these incidents and questions make the experience of travel critical to the ways in which women and men encountered and negotiated their position on their arrival to sugar plantations of Trinidad and Guyana.

Trinidad and Guyana formed part of a larger network of British colonies which imported labor from India.[4] The port cities of Calcutta in the east, Bombay in the west, and Madras in the south were the three points of embarkation for laborers migrating overseas. The Trinidadian and Guyanese depots were located in Calcutta and Madras, from where all laborers were sent off to distant colonies of the British Empire. Each colony soliciting labor from India had a separate depot. These depots were the hub of emigration activities in the port towns of Calcutta and Madras, where recruited women and men workers were kept until all formalities of emigration were completed. It was here that they were medically examined, the nature of their indentures explained to them, and their contracts signed before they boarded ships for the Caribbean and elsewhere.

The emigration depots of British colonies like Mauritius, Fiji, and other foreign colonies like those of the French government, also conducted their emigration proceedings from the port cities of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay and were located in close proximity to each other. This generated competition between depots vying for indentured laborers and was perceived as unfair by some of the smaller or newer ones like Trinidad and Guyana. As early

as 1844, when migration of laborers to the West Indies was intermittent and irregular, an official despatch to the Court of Directors of the East India Company raised some of the most pressing problems that would arise if competition between depots was not regulated. The greater distance of travel from India to the West Indies as compared to Mauritius was seen as a potential problem. As the despatch explained to the East India Company:

> If the difference in the length of the voyage to Mauritius and the West Indies is fully explained to the laborers here as it ought to be, the greater distance of the West Indies islands will induce the laborers, desirous of emigrating to prefer emigration to Mauritius unless higher wages be offered to them on their selecting the West Indies; and those who emigrate to the West Indies will probably be inferior to those going to Mauritius, unless, indeed to avoid this result, and to prevent the West Indies and Mauritius from bidding against each other, the emigration to the West Indies be confined to Madras and Bombay, as that to Mauritius is confined to Bengal.[5]

These recommendations, however, remained on paper and were never implemented. Laborers to all parts of the colonized world emigrated from the ports of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, and the ensuing competition for workers continued in some measure throughout the period of indentured labor emigration overseas. Although this competition did not become a serious problem for the emigration authorities in the different depots, complaints were often lodged by one against another. The Port-Of-Spain Gazette reported of one such complaint in 1857 made by the Immigration Agent Mr. Thompson of Trinidad, who reported to the Secretary of State, of the

illegal practices of a Mauritian planter who offered cash advances to prospective emigrant workers and spread rumors of physical abuse rampant on Trinidadian plantations to lure them away from the Trinidad depot. As a means to fight this competition, Thompson suggested that following the example of French authorities in Pondicherry, emigration agents should be given the authority to advance cash loans to workers emigrating to the West Indies. This recommendation was approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and from 1858 onwards the practice of cash advances, which had hitherto been seen as bribes, became official policy.[6] This effectively translated to indebtedness for the workers, a state which they carried over from India to their new work locations.[7]

Some of the apprehensions reflected in the issues raised above were clearly overstated. Most workers, even when they were told of their duties on plantations and their contracts of indenture explained to them in some depth, (which as shown in chapter one, was never adequately undertaken), did not fully understand the nature of the journey overseas. Most came from remote rural corners of the country and travel to a big port city like Calcutta or Madras in itself was a first time experience. Details such as distances to be traveled across oceans was never mentioned. One emigration agent in his testimony to the Sanderson Committee observed about the workers' dread and caste inhibitions of sea voyage thus: "They call it (the sea) "kala pani", and, if you want to stop a

coolie from emigrating,... you have only to mention the words "kala pani", and he says he will not go at once."[8]

From the moment the recruited laborers entered the depots where they spent an average of 20 to 25 days waiting to board ships, they encountered changes in their social milieu which in some ways, was the harbinger of ritual and social disruptions that would follow henceforth. The prolonged compulsory residence in depots was the first step in the gradual breakdown of caste hierarchies and boundaries of ritual pollution and purity in the close confines of depot life. Dictated by the rules and regulations of emigration agencies, life in the depots resembled, in many ways, the rigors of barrack life that the workers would encounter on the sugar plantations. Habits of food and social interaction were no longer solely dictated by caste obligations. Although the majority of laborers belonged to the lower castes, there was a sufficient intermixing of workers from all castes. Apart from the disruption of caste practices, the residential patterns of depot life necessitated the close proximity of hundreds of men to a much smaller number of women (mostly single), signaling the beginnings of subtle changes in the power equations that informed gender relations amongst this group of workers. Women and men, living temporarily in a world not controlled by the patriarchal norms they were familiar with and in a state of social disruption, many of whom were far away from their spouses and families, quite often formed temporary and sometimes, permanent relationships with each other. These

friendships often became the basis for the recreation of extended family and kinship networks subsequently on the plantations. The presence of a significantly smaller number of women in the depots also made them vulnerable to sexual abuse. The depots, in many senses, became early models for the negotiations between women and men over traditionally received patriarchal values and norms, and more generally, they embodied the changing social and gender dynamic that women and men, during months of shipboard and years of plantation life, would closely imitate.

Depot life, irrespective of which colony the depot was controlled by, was bleak for most workers. The depots were in the close proximity of the port and sea-faring vessels and most workers soon realized that they were being sent away to far off regions across the oceans. For many, who had been duped into thinking that they were only going to a city job or to a place of pilgrimage, the prospect of overseas travel was the last straw in a despairing journey from the rural hinterlands. Some, threatened by the prospects of jail if they refused to go at this last minute, tried to run away, or at worst, even committed suicide. Jal Chamar, a returned emigrant from Fiji, in his testimony to Mr. A.C. Dutt, a Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, gives a detailed description of depot life before departure and his subsequent life on a Fijian sugar plantation. All depots, irrespective of which country was running it, were patterned on identical lines and the condition of one closely proximated the condition of others.

Jal Chamar's testimony therefore needs reiteration, to get a sense of how emigration depots in Calcutta functioned. This is how he describes life on the emigration depot:

> ...After alighting from the train at night, we were taken by boat to a house on the other side of the river. The women began to cry when they were put into the boat. On the following morning the men and women were stripped of their clothes and made to bathe, for which tepid water was supplied by a Mehtar to the men, and by a mehtar woman to the women. Everyone was supplied with a dhotie, too small for the women, and a Kurta. The clothes left by the men and women before bathing were taken away by the Mehter and the Mehtrani. My wife had some ornaments on her person but Kharwan took them off together with her other clothes and my clothes and shoes.
> ...Men and women were given a tin plate and an earthen pot each and all had to sit down at one and the same place, along with the large number of men and women who were already in that house, to take meals without distinction of caste or religion. A man named Debidin Kahar having objected to eat in the same line with people of other castes was severely beaten and compelled to eat with the others. Seeing this, nobody else dared say anything about caste or religion.
> ...We were also told by Kharwan and the Durwans of the place that the Sahib would come presently and ask us if we were going willingly and that we must say yes to his questions or otherwise we would be sent to jail.[9]

A military like regimen is described by Jal Chamar, where every recruited worker irrespective of caste, sex, or age, underwent the drill of emigration enrollment, wiping out differences between men and women. This social leveling that began in the depots was neither superficial nor momentary. It was the beginning of social and gender reconfiguration that both women and men workers translated in ways meaningful to

their changed circumstances aboard ships and on plantations. Jal Chamar's reference to women having to wear the male garments "dhotie and kurta", in some ways, serves an allegorical and symbolic meaning for the changing social and gender dynamic that women encountered from the moment they were recruited as indentured workers. By signing independent contracts, and in many of their cases, traveling alone overseas, women recruits had erased some important patriarchal markers of difference between the genders and confused the categories of role differentiation between women and men. Patricia Mohammed aptly points out that, "from the time they entered the recruitment depots at Calcutta and Madras, the men and women who chose to leave India entered into a different negotiation of gender relations than that which they would have experienced had they remained in India."[10]

Among the emigration formalities that were conducted on the depots, one important aspect was the medical check up of all the workers before boarding ships for their overseas destination. It would seem from official opinion that there were separate female nurses to look after the women and that these medical examinations went without much complaint or problems. Mr. William Morison, an overseer, manager and part proprietor from 1875 to 1906 discussed this aspect at some length with the Sanderson Committee. On being asked by a Committee member, George Robertson, as to whether he had heard of any trouble about women being examined before they embarked from India, and if any "respectable man would like" his wife

to go through this examination, Morison affirmed that they were examined by females in Trinidad, but was not very sure of the practices in India. Morison, on being pressed, could only tentatively say, "I expect it is a woman in India just the same. I think it must be a woman in India, because they have trained nurses there."[11] Irrespective of whether the women recruits were examined by female nurses, the medical examination was necessary because emigration officials felt that the majority of women were "loose women of the streets of Calcutta", and were liable of spreading sexually transmitted diseases. Morison himself felt that if these women were not "weeded" out in the depots, they would bring these diseases all the way to the plantations of the West Indies. He was strongly in favor of medical examination of all women in the depots of Calcutta, arguing to the Sanderson Committee:

> I do not say that it is necessary if the woman has been living with the man in India, but it is necessary if the woman is just picked up off the streets off Calcutta, as they often are. I have seen us having great trouble on the estate with one woman like that; in fact I have seen one woman put half a dozen men into our hospital before we found out about it.[12]

Women, as argued above, encountered dubious stereotyping and assumptions about the nature of the past lives they led on the flimsiest of evidence by the British officialdom. In the case of many women emigrants resident in depots, their status as single or unmarried, by itself made them suspect in the eyes of the emigration officials, who showed little hesitancy in implementing intrusive practices like medical exams to weed

out, rather than look after the general health of the workers. Their greatest concern was to keep a check on sexually transmitted diseases and keep out "immoral" women from the depots. If the medical examinations had been more wholesomely designed, there would probably have been less mortality and less concern for the deteriorating sanitary conditions in the depots.

Medical examinations in the depots were cursory at best and were little concerned with the overall health of the recruited workers. Sanitary conditions often became a serious concern for the officials as mortality in the depots became high, making these contentious issues amongst opposers of the system of indentureship like the Anti-Slavery Society and later in early twentieth century, the newly emerging Indian nationalists. As early as 1857, complaints made their way into the Trinidadian newspapers, protesting the poor health of workers who arrived from the shores of India. The Port-Of-Spain Gazette commented in 1857 on the arrival of a batch of indentured workers:

> Now, it appears to us pretty certain that the coolies are often embarked at Calcutta, of a class, and in a state which can be attended with no other results than the one we are now deploring; it seems to us that there can be no hesitation in saying that cholera raged in the depot whence these coolies were sent.[13]

Sanitation in the depots fell far short of the standard, sometimes forcing emigration officials to make recommendations for improvement. In official minds, interestingly, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and the incidence of high

mortality, although were in some measure due to the changed circumstances of the workers lives, but also partly due to the presence of women with "loose morals". In 1871, the two most important recommendations that the surgeon for the depots of Guyana and Trinidad made were concerning sanitary conditions and the type of women emigrants who should be encouraged to emigrate. For an official, responsible solely for the health and medical well-being of the workers, the latter concern with women seems out of place, but in important ways, indicates the general official stigma against single women emigrants. W.J. Palmer, the depot surgeon for Guyana and Trinidad recommended to the Protector of Immigrants:

> I would further beg permission to remark that any additional expenditures which emigration will bear should, in my opinion, be made in improving, as far as possible, existing sanitary arrangements of the Calcutta depots and in granting inducements to respectable married women to emigrate.[14]

General mortality in the depots was high enough to cause concern amongst the officials. The annual reports on emigration from India to the British and foreign colonies give us a fair understanding of the proportion of mortality rates for all depots located in Calcutta. According to the annual report for 1877-78, the general mortality for all indentured workers living in depots was as follows:

> During 1876-77, 9417 coolies were received into the depots. Forty out of the number died, showing a death-rate of 4.20 per thousand. In the past year, 168 emigrants died out of 22,544 admitted, representing a death-rate of 7.40 per thousand. The Protector of Emigrants observes that, comparing the death-rate with

> the average number of days' detention (25) it appears that the annual rate of mortality was 111 per thousand.... It is obvious that the death-rate among intending emigrants during their detention in depot represents the mortality arising partly from the changed conditions of their life, and partly from the weeding out of the weaker members, to whose "anoemic and ill-fed condition" the Protector has called attention.[15]

General mortality amongst the adult male and female workers was somehow written off as either conditions extraneous to health and food management in depots or largely due to the poverty from which many workers came, making them susceptible to diseases. It was more difficult, however, to explain the very high rates of infant mortality in terms of changed life conditions or poverty. High incidence of infant mortality, reflected to a great degree on the poor sanitary and food conditions in the depots, necessitating official inquiries and recommendations to overcome these problems. The annual report on emigration from Calcutta reports of infant mortality in 1877-1878:

> The proportion of infant mortality was undoubtedly high. Out of the 168 deaths which occurred in the depots, 109 or 65 percent of the total were those of children, while among adults, there were 59 deaths, being 35 percent of the recorded mortality....The protector should make enquiry into the circumstances attending this heavy mortality, and should endeavour to introduce some special precautions against its recurrence. It is not enough to say that the emigrants were Biharis....Cholera and diarrhoea caused the largest number of deaths, and these are the diseases which would most naturally be induced among coolies by the journey from their homes to Calcutta, and their change of food and of habits of life. Small pox, however caused 18

of the deaths, and chest affections (sic) 21.[16]

The above figures tell of the mortality affecting workers emigrating to all colonies that were importing labor from India in the nineteenth century. Although mortality figures for the port of Madras are not available, a comparison of mortality rates for the Trinidad and Guyana depots located in Calcutta reveal interesting information.[17] Between the years 1878-79 to 1892, the period for which figures for mortality are available, female mortality was higher than male deaths in the Trinidad depot in the entire period. with the exception of the year 1887.[18] The reason for that year's anomaly is not known. Worker mortality in the Guyanese depot, however, shows interesting variation. Between the years 1878 to 1883, mortality rates for women were slightly lower than the rate of male mortality, but in the subsequent period from 1883-84 to 1892, the rate of mortality for females got reversed and became higher than male mortality.[19] Mortality of children (ages ten and under)[20], was higher than both male and female mortality in the Trinidadian and Guyanese depots, but the highest rate of mortality was amongst the infants resident or born in the depots. The infant mortality rate in the Trinidad depot for the entire period between 1878 and 1892 was approximately 4.62 percent, while the rate for Guyana followed close at 4.40 percent.[21] A comparative examination of the mortality data between the two depots shows no dramatic differences in the conditions of the two depots. While male

mortality rates were identical for the two depots in the period between 1878 and 1892, overall female mortality in the depot of Trinidad was 0.45 percent which was slightly higher than in the Guyana depot whose female mortality rate was 0.42 percent.[22]

After residing in the depots for an average of approximately 2 to 3 weeks, the workers boarded ships which would take them to their new destinations. Maharani, who was indentured to a Trinidadian sugar plantation gives a vivid account of the manner in which she and hundreds of her fellow workers boarded the ship docked at the Calcutta port:

> When e coming ship
> everybody gone inside
> an dem people watching an telling me
> not to go
> not to go
> everybody watching in window like
> me an all watching
> ...dem saying
> not to go
> dey shaking hand so
> not to go
>
> ...everybody dey inside dey
> everybody
> nobody cyan come out from dey again
> like saamundar moolook may k arra
> ganga
> jamuna e parr.[23]

Maharani, in her oral account to the author Mahabir, remembers the encounter that she and other embarking indentured workers had with a ship full of laborers returning from their completed indentureship on some plantation overseas. These returned immigrant workers tried to warn Maharani and others not to get on to the ships which would

take them away from their home. However, as Maharani goes on to recount with a certain pathos, there was little hope or chance for the workers to leave at this late stage, and all of them boarded the ships to go to the "saamundar moolook may k arra", that is, to the island standing in the sea,[24] many miles away from Ganga and Jamuna, the two big North Indian rivers.

The most common and cost-effective mode of transportation of indentured workers were the wooden sailing ships, carrying an average capacity load of approximately 400 passengers. By the late 1870s, the carrying capacity of ships had increased to 600 to 700 passengers. This created problems for individual depots as emigration officials had to keep the workers resident in the depots for a longer duration, waiting to complete the quotas for one shipload. This was not a situation that the officials wanted to prolong or encourage as workers got discontented and desertions became frequent. By early twentieth century, indentured workers for both Trinidad and Guyana were boarded in one ship, a system that had very few supporters, both amongst the officials and the emigrating workers. The workers, in the long journey together made friendships amongst each other and did not welcome the prospect of getting separated once they reached their respective destinations.

Technological innovation in the British shipping industry in the early 1900s, introduced steam ships which had larger carrying capacities, were safer and much faster than the sail

ships. These steamers were introduced in the transportation of indentured workers and found to have a mortality rate aboard that was significantly lower than on the sail ships. However they never became popular with the emigration officials or the shipping companies which chartered the emigrant ships, as they proved to be much more expensive than the sailing ships.[25] Through the entire period of indentureship therefore, the authorities depended primarily on the sail ships, some of which had become dangerous and unsafe and should ideally have been put out of commission.

Provisions were made in emigration laws to regulate and inspect the living areas designated for men and women and to supervise the strict separation of the sexes on the decks of the ship. Separate areas were to be allotted for the single men and women, with the married couples providing a buffer between the two. However, the sail ships were not large enough to provide adequate compartmentalization of the decks, and there was enough opportunity for the men and women to intermingle. In 1913 Swami Sharvananda, a well-to-do passenger traveling in the cabin of an emigrant ship, S.S. Tara gave a description of the lower decks where the emigrant workers traveled that describes their living space on ships:

> ...I went up to the first deck and took my stand near the bridge to get a clear and full view of those country-men of mine quartered below in the lower decks, who had been turned out of their land of birth by the dire hand of poverty and compelled to seek their livelihood in some distant unknown regions....The lower decks presented a very pitiable sight! They were literally packed by that huge crowd - a

> regular medley of human figures - men, women, children, all mixed up pell mell huddled together like a flock of sheep, without any consideration of distinction in age or sex, or any decency as to matter shown to them.[26]

In the early years of indentured emigration from India to the West Indies, the season for ship voyages was not closely monitored and ships sailed at all times of the year, dictated largely by the demands for labor on sugar plantations and its fulfillment by recruiters in India. Soon however, this came under attack as the mortality rates during the summer and monsoon months between March and July, especially of women and children was extremely high. The season for emigration from the 1880s became fixed between August and February.[27] Several other significant changes were made over the years, largely with the hope of ameliorating the conditions under which the workers traveled in the ships. One important addition made in 1860, after the lapse of several years of indentured immigration, was the appointment of a qualified medical practitioner to look after the health of the workers during the long voyage.[28] Food provisions also underwent some changes as officials tried to carry items that were closer to the diet that was familiar to the workers. Since workers came from different parts of the country, following different dietary habits, this was not an easy task and most often the only familiar items that could be provided to them was rice, flour, and "dhal" or lentils.

The long sea voyage over the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope of Africa, with patterns of good,

indifferent to extremely hostile weather, was a journey that was not easily forgotten by the migrant workers. The voyage lasted an average of about 90 to 95 days, with some ships taking as long as 192 days and yet others as short as 53 days.[29] The day to day routine aboard the ship was simple. There were "bhandaries" or cooks who prepared the meals with the help of the women workers. They were given a simple meal of rice or flour, "dhal" and sometimes supplemented with meat or fish. After the morning meal, the surgeon superintendent inspected the workers and tended to those who fell ill. The laborers were also made to sweep and keep the decks clean. They were then allowed some recreation.[30]

The voyage has been remembered by several ex-indentured workers with mixed emotions. Hope, better prospects, excitement, wonder, anguish, despair and despondency were all in some measure, part of the emigrants' experience on this journey. While, at one level, they grappled with social and gender adjustments where abiding principles of social organization like caste, religion, or patriarchy mattered little, they also, at another level, had to deal with making new and different social ties and absorb the newness of their physical and material surroundings. K. J. Grant, a Presbyterian missionary working amongst Indian indentured workers on Trinidadian sugar plantations observed in his memoir:

> ...The treatment of the East Indians, under indenture has had a decided leveling effect. It began on board ship. All were huddled

> together and treated alike in matters of eating and sleeping accommodation. There were no separate cooks for each caste, nor separate dishes. When they landed in Trinidad and were sent to different estates, social distinctions were not regarded.[31]

Poonamma, an ex-indentured Tamilian female worker who emigrated from the port of Madras in 1916, as a six year old girl accompanying her parents, on being asked by me about what she remembered of the sea journey, still had wonder in her voice as she recalled the excitement of seeing a submarine for the first and only time in her life. She also remembered that their voyage was quite dangerous as it was during World War I. Not surprisingly, as a child who could not have known of the rigors of hard work that was awaiting their arrival in Trinidad, Poonamma had only fond memories of the voyage.[32]

Maharani who emigrated around the same period that Poonamma did, gives a very colorful description of their time aboard the ship:

> Everybody beating drum an dancing in de boat
> dem gi dem drum an ting
> dem singing an dancing an ting
> dem bringing happy
> dem eh bringing no trouble...
> When submarine coming
> dem out de light an make e quiet
> dem cyan sing
> dem dey quiet
> everybody quiet.[33]

From the above accounts of the two women migrants, it would seem that the journey itself was not problematic, but instead quite pleasurable. While there were many moments of enjoyment for the workers, where they found time to get acquainted with each other and form long-lasting friendships,

other sources do not confirm that the long voyages were without mishaps. Sankar, another ex-indentured worker whose oral testimony has been recorded by Mahabir, remembers the sickness and death that sometimes clouded the journey. Seasickness was extremely common, and sometimes a few workers utterly despondent of their situation and feeling trapped, took the ultimate desperate step of jumping overboard and committing suicide. Sankar describes his own voyage as one hounded by illness:

> ...You go up
> sit down watching de sea
> watching sea all de time...
> Bhai
> I understand
> I understand I go dead
> because why
> giddiness
> giddiness
> I cyan eat bhai
> an if e trow up
> e eh ha nuttin in it
> nuttin cyan come up
> an e lie down oneside
> I feel I eh go live
> I go dead.
> ...If dey want to kill dey self
> dey nuh have to make everybody see
> dey go jump an dey gone
> jump
> an dey gone.[34]

Sankar's description of his condition of seasickness and giddiness was quite common amongst the workers, but was not the most important reason for the high rate of mortality that was common aboard the sail ships, particularly in the early years of indentured migration. The earliest recorded incident of severe mortality on an emigration ship was the case of the British ship Salsette which was chartered from Calcutta to

Trinidad in the 1850s. Salsette embarked with 324 workers of whom 274 were adults. Of these workers an overwhelmingly large number of 120 workers died in the course of the voyage. Although in many instances of high ship mortality, the outbreak of an epidemic like cholera, mumps, measles or diarrhea would be the chief cause, in the case of Salsette it was primarily on account of the lack of food aboard, and the general unhygenic conditions on the ship which caused such a high rate of death.[35] Jane Swinton, the wife of the captain of Salsette who wrote the Journal with the editorial help of James Carlile[36], felt that in fairness to the ship owners, who otherwise had to shoulder the entire burden of such rates of mortality and whose companies suffered from bad publicity, they should be allowed to appoint a doctor who would work with the surgeon appointed by the emigration authority, in the hope that better inspection of the health of workers would follow.

The case of Salsette was quickly seized by the Anti-Slavery Society of England as a political weapon against the whole system of indentureship that had only recently been inaugurated. The letters between L. Chamerovzow, the Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and Otto Wenkstern between July and October 1859, discuss the case of the ship Salsette at some length. Otto Wenkstern in a letter addressed to Chamerovzow, voices strong objection to editor Carlile's preface to the Journal, where he generalized about the mortality on all emigration ships from the case of Salsette and claimed a rate of one-third deaths on all ships.

Such allegations, according to him were merely political rumor mongering, and an attempt to place the entire blame on the indentureship system rather than to see it largely as the result of negligence of an individual captain. To this angry allegation, Chamerovzow replied:

> I emphatically deny that the mortality on board the Salsette was caused by any negligence of Captain Swinton, and though I admit some on the part of the immigration agent. I believe it to have been inseparable from the system. So long as crimping is permitted and the crimps have a certain sum per head for every coolie they bring in...we must expect similar disasters....[37]

Political posturing aside, the high rate of mortality on the emigration ships, especially in the early period of indentured migration was taken seriously by emigration officials. In the emigration season of 1856-57, for instance, the incidence of mortality on all ships leaving the port of Calcutta for the West Indies was abnormally high, averaging 17.27 percent in the entire season. The ship Merchantman suffered 31.17 percent mortality, while Robert Seppings, Roman Emperor, Maidstone, and Scindian followed with 20.96 percent, 28.11 percent, 24.53 percent and 20.83 percent respectively.[38] Unlike depot mortality figures which were reported according to sex and age, we do not get a clear gender comparison on the ship mortality figures. However, the nature of official concern subsequent on receiving mortality reports, and the type of recommendations that were forwarded to the government of India suggest that hidden in these generally high mortality figures, the figures for female and infant mortality were

skewed and of greater concern. The remedies suggested in 1857 by Dr. Monat, for example, show that the gender gap in mortality figures, largely to the detriment of women and children, was one area which needed radical improvements. His suggestion to the government of India emphasized "the diminution in the proportion of women and children to 25 percent. If possible, it is desirable not to embark pregnant females, or those who are nursing infants at the breast."[39] In October 1860, the government of Bengal appointed a Committee to consider the system of emigration with particular emphasis on ways to curb the high mortality rates on ships. The government was specially concerned as it did not want the ire of the opposition on itself, which missed no opportunity to denounce the system of indentured emigration as a "new system of slavery", replicating everything from the slave ships' notorious "middle passage" to conditions of bondage on the plantations. The Committee, in addition to recommending that a medical doctor be appointed to accompany all ships, also directed that no more than 25 women to every 100 men should be embarked. While the first recommendation was readily accepted by the government and acted upon without delay, the second one requiring a lowering of the ratio of women emigrants per ship was not approved. The only concession made by the government was to discontinue the embarkation of pregnant women and very young children from the 1860s.[40]

Official concern with female mortality on ships did not, however, end in 1860 with these new provisions. It seemed to

some officials that the pattern of female mortality reached its highest peak during the monsoon season and that since female emigrants were most vulnerable before the beginning of November, Dr. Monat's suggestion that the ratio of women emigrants be reduced from the existing 40 percent to 25 percent was again reiterated.[41] By the 1870s, the British official class involved with Indian emigration proceedings finally conceded that something needed to be done to control the female mortality rates on ships. The Rules of the Indian Emigration Act VII of 1871 were amended accordingly. Rules 23, 23a and 23b were changed, now requiring a shipment of only 25 women to every 100 men during the months of August, September and October and a larger proportion during the succeeding months, in order to fully make up the season's average complement of 40 women to every 100 men.[42] Significantly, although in the above rules certain concessions were made to the demand for reduction of female emigrants, the government, skeptical of reducing the 40 percent ratio, remained fixed on that number. This policy of reducing the number of women in certain months, only to be made up in the following ones, was not received well by emigration agents, the Caribbean immigration officials, or the recruiters. Sharp criticism was voiced in the Immigration Report of 1878-79, highlighting the practical problems that recruiters and agents faced in implementing such rules:

> Pressed too by famine they (workers) presented themselves in family groups with their bonafide wives who are usually left behind but

> under this new regulation these most desirable immigrants could not be embarked....It is sad enough to know that owing to local prejudice there is difficulty in getting even 40%of the women to embark as emigrants, but *when famine removes that difficulty for a time and allows the sexes to present themselves in more equal proportions, a slight excess of mortality among females should not interfere with the material comfort of the husbands,* with that comfort which is the chief means of making them happy in their new homes and useful to their employers.[43] (my emphasis)

In the face of such constant criticisms the government of India retracted its earlier changes in the ratio of females and in September of 1879 canceled rules 23, 23a and 23b and reinstated the earlier rule 23 which stated that "Of the total number of emigrants to be embarked on board each ship, the proportion of adult females shall not, except as provided in rule 25[44], be less than 40 to every 100 adult males."[45] The government went a step further by informing all emigration agents that henceforth, if they were unable to get the required 40 percent of women, they were to reduce the number of men emigrants accordingly.[46]

While female mortality rates on ships embarking in the early period was the focus of official concern, the overall mortality percentage rate for the period between 1859 and 1870 was as high as 6.20 for the ships going to Guyana, while ship mortality for Trinidad for the same period was 4.20.[47] While the average mortality on ships heading for Guyana and Trinidad from the port of Calcutta, in this early period remained approximately 3 percent to 4 percent, certain individual ships suffered drastic deaths on voyage, pushing up the rate of

mortality in considerable proportions.[48] The rate of mortality on ships traveling to Guyana and Trinidad in later years did improve, though the rates consistently remained higher than the rate of mortality on depots. In the period from 1877 to 1889, the average mortality rate on ships heading for Guyana went down significantly to 1.66 percent, and for Trinidad to 1.90 percent.[49]

Numerous reports on the incidence of high mortality made their way into the Trinidadian and Guyanese contemporary newspapers, particularly in the early years, inviting editorial comment on the possible causes for such high figures. Most felt that the problem originated in the depots where a "low and poor" class of people got recruited, and adequate care was not taken in the depots to heal the sick who were allowed to board ships carrying germs with them.[50] Even in the twentieth century, when overall mortality rates had dropped significantly, an individual ship could become prone to the kind of health disaster that earlier ships frequently suffered. The Daily Chronicle of British Guiana reported of one such ship named Moy which suffered extreme mortality in 1905:

> the Coolie ship Moy, which arrived this week from Calcutta, had an eventful voyage. The mortality was abnormally high, as many as 46 deaths having been registered, and as the ship dropped anchor in the harbour three more deaths occurred. The chief cause of death was cerebro-spinal meningitis. For the past two days the Medical Inspector has been examining the newly arrived immigrants, who are a poor looking lot....What is surprising about the excessive mortality is that the voyage was a

> comparatively short one, and that the immigrants are supposed to have embarked "all well.[51]

In the course of the seventy or more years of indentured Indian emigration from the ports of Calcutta and Madras, the dangers of sailing between continents declined without necessarily bringing any radical changes in the mode of travel or the degree of comfort afforded to the workers. Mortality rates declined with time as officials became more careful, but for the workers emigrating, the dilemmas of the unknown that lay ahead for them did not go away with time. For every fresh batch of male and female workers who migrated, the challenges of the unknown life ahead, as also the changes in their known patterns of social existence remained a daunting prospect.

Although the government had stipulated that pregnant and nursing women not be allowed to emigrate, they continued to be recruited and were allowed to travel on the long voyages. Statistics on the number of births at sea contradicts the government regulation, and as with other such emigration laws, there was a significant gap between written provisions and their application. Between the years 1871 to 1890, the average number of births at sea was approximately 25 to 30 newborns in every shipping season, with as many as 82 births in the season of 1878 for ships traveling to the port of Guyana.[52] For Trinidad, the average number of births at sea was lower than the figure for Guyana, at about 15 per shipping season. The highest number of births was in the season of 1890 when the number mounted to 32.[53] One reason for the lower incidence

of births on ships heading for Trinidad was that the number of male and female workers emigrating to Trinidad was much lower than those emigrating to Guyana in every shipping season. Pregnancy, and nursing newborn infants on the long voyage to the West Indies added yet another burden which women had to deal with aboard the ship.

The overwhelming presence of men, be they fellow workers, or the ship authorities, sardars and other minor officials, did not facilitate a non-threatening and trouble-free atmosphere on the ship decks for the far fewer women who traveled with them. Although the unequal number of women to men workers indentured on the sugar plantations, was a situation that the women sometimes translated to their favor, by having more choice in forming relationships, leaving a man who did not treat her well for someone else, (sometimes, however at great cost to her own safety), the same was not true on board the ships. The men and women were trapped in the confined space of a sailing ship with no place to run away to or hide. The ship atmosphere was overwhelmingly male, making it difficult for women to find much sympathy for any abuse that they may have encountered. Sexual abuse and even rape was not unheard of on these ships and the women had very few options of turning to anyone for help. The authorities, in any case, had predisposed ideas about the morality of the women emigrants, and most often even when they did admonish the men for wrongdoing, they did so halfheartedly. Most officials' stereotyped women emigrants, especially those who traveled

alone as being "women of the streets" and therefore of loose morals, bringing on themselves the abuse they suffered. Sometimes the immigration officials reported such abuse to the authorities, but little if any action was ever taken. For instance, in 1872 a despatch was sent from the Acting Immigration Agent-General to the Under-Secretary to the government of Bengal which stated:

> ...There are no privies aft for the women, *a great defect which has been repeatedly noticed in previous reports*. Dr. Caroll says, " I have again to notice the unbridled licence assumed by the crew in regard to the women. Women go in and out of the forecastle all hours at night. Even when going to the water closets the crew if idle, never fail to assail them, and this very circumstance of the water closets being so far forward, with none aft for the females.[54](my emphasis)

The crew, which had more authority and license with an entrapped female population on the ships, abused their power over them, making the situation intolerable as women had virtually no recourse for complaint left. Although not all ship authorities violated and abused women, the incident of widespread sexual abuse and rape aboard the ship Ailsa traveling to Guyana serves as a case in point of the dangers that lurked during a long voyage, and the potential threats to women's safety aboard the ships. A large number of emigrating workers accused Dr. Holman, the surgeon of Ailsa, of sexually abusing and raping some of the female workers. He was also charged with not providing adequate food to the emigrants. The workers unanimously demanded when the ship docked in St. Helena, that Dr. Holman be removed. The agitation of the

workers over the behavior of the ship's surgeon was so great that a Commission of Enquiry was set up to investigate the matter. Testimonies from several women and men were taken by the Commissioners, and the report produced by them from the evidence throws some interesting light on not only the dangers that accompanied women traveling alone on sea voyages, but also the functioning of the emigration and other official bureaucracy of the time.[55]

Several women came forward to testify against the doctor, and except for one woman named Lowrumgee, the rest more or less, corroborated each others' experience with the doctor. Soriffa had this to say of the doctor and his behavior towards her:

> The doctor used to offer me biscuit and sugar, and did so as I was going to the closet, taking that opportunity. The doctor came down one night between decks, took me by the arm and dragged me upstairs into his cabin. No conversation took place between the doctor and myself. The doctor had connexion (sic) with me....Next day the doctor put my husband in irons and for four days we had nothing to eat....I did complain to the commander but he is as bad as the doctor...[56]

Ramjharee, another female emigrant related an almost identical experience of sexual abuse by the doctor:

> ...The surgeon on three occasions induced me to go into his cabin and he had connexion (sic) with me three times, I was afraid to refuse because he used to slap me on my bottom and pinch me. He used to slap me hard on my bottom and hurt me.[57]

Several other women from the same ship testified in similar manner on how the doctor abused and terrorized them during the

voyage. Despite collecting a lot of evidence from several men and women, the Commissioners' report found the charges made against Dr. Holman as largely unfounded, an opinion so flagrant of evidence, truth, and justice that even the Governor, though accepting it, did so with "some reserve."[58] The commissioners attributed the incident against Dr. Holman as primarily due to the internal rivalry between different British officials and the general "excitability" of Indians. In this instance it was the rivalry between another ship officer Mr. Gerald Boyle and Dr. Holman, where Boyle on discovering Holman's abuse of the women, rounded up the workers against the doctor. This is what the commissioners' thought about the behavior of Dr. Holman with the women:

> ...The means appear inadequate to the result without making large allowances for the credibility and excitability of Indians - but perhaps *Dr. Holman's injudicious conduct in carrying a strap with which he struck though he did not hurt the people and his familiarity with the female emigrants which, though innocent enough, was foolish,* may have created more irritation than was supposed....[59](my emphasis)

The commissioners found the doctor's abuse of the women "innocent" but "foolish". The apathy of the British officialdom toward the plight of women, especially in matters which concerned the abuse of their bodies and other such sexual misconduct, was clearly revealed in the nature of justice that was meted out in the aftermath of this incident. While the accused Dr. Holman, was given the gratuity that was owed to him, and was fined for his behavior, the gratuities of

the other officers were withheld. Mr. Gerald Boyle, who according to the commissioners, incited the workers against Holman, was excluded from employment on any emigration ship. Evidently, the establishment of peace and discipline on board the ship was far more important than redressing the violence that was perpetrated on the women. Members of ship crew who had done nothing, and had not squashed the workers' complaints more rigorously, were taken to task in a stricter fashion than was Holman himself. The women's accounts of official misconduct was hardly ever taken seriously, as in the eyes of the British officialdom, these women lacked sufficient credibility against the words of a law-abiding Englishman. The Governor in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary on the whole incident, more or less concurred with the commissioners' report on the matter of women, though interestingly, he did not so readily believe that the workers' anger with Holman over inadequate food supplies was unfounded. On the matter of sexual abuse of women by Holman, this was the explanation he sent to the Colonial Secretary, "...it is almost impossible to credit that in a ship with English officers and seamen aboard, in the sight of 330 adult male coolies, the surgeon either would or could carry off a woman by force into his cabin to ravish her."[60]

While such large-scale and publicized incidents of sexual abuse of women emigrants on the ships were rare, the ensuing miscarriage of justice was quite common, as both male and female workers continued to encounter indifference toward

their plight from the authorities in port depots, ships and ultimately on the plantations. The case of Aisla was an extreme one which got reported in detail precisely because of its severity, but day to day unwelcome sexual advances and encounters of women on the ships went unnoticed, and hence never found their way into official records.

The women and men workers emigrating together, rallied and supported each other particularly in the face of official misbehavior on the ships as they knew that they were powerless against such authority and could only find strength in rallying together in times of crisis. This behavior learnt in the hardships of a long sea voyage, remained with the workers on plantations as well. Men and women, living in such close quarters for three to four months, naturally also formed strong bonds of friendship which sometimes lasted for a lifetime. These relationships were some of the earliest forms of social and community networks that were being created, and often these "jahaji" (ship brethren), relationships formed the backbone of fictive kinship formations. In the social vacuum of an isolated and foreign plantation life, where the familiar and important presence of an extended family and kinship network was sorely missed by the workers, the relationships of Mausi (mother's sister) or Kaka (father's brother) could often be traced to the jahaji friendships of the first generation of Indian immigrants in Trinidad and Guyana.[61] The long voyage in many ways, became crucial to the ways in which the community of workers would recreate, change, and negotiate the

unfamiliar terrain of plantation life and recharge their social space with somewhat familiar, though significantly different alignments of social relations in general and gender dynamics in particular.

Notes

[1]The ritual sanctions and caste restrictions on travelling overseas (or over *kalapani*) was most strictly practiced among upper castes Hindus. We know that India, in both ancient and medieval periods, had extensive trading relations with overseas kingdoms and its trading castes could hardly follow such caste strictures. For our purposes, the metaphor of *kalapani* explains more the risks of the unknown that the women and men were undertaking in their travel to the sugar plantations of Trinidad and Guyana than the fear of losing their caste. This, however, is not to suggest that the brahmanical strictures on travelling overseas and consequently losing one's caste was not a real or perceived problem in most emigrants minds.

[2]Indentured worker, Bharath's oral testimony recorded verbatim in creole English in Mahabir's The Still Cry, p.95.

[3]The two exceptions are Mohammed, "Social History of Post Migrant Indians," and Lawrence, A Question of Labour.

[4]Some of the prominent regions which imported indentured labor from India in the nineteenth century were South and South East Asia, Mauritius, Madagascar, Fiji, Natal (South Africa), East Africa, British Caribbean, Surinam, French colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Cayenne. See Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p.19 and p.279. For a good discussion of the indentureship experiment in several regions of the British Empire, particularly Mauritius see Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labor Overseas, 1830-1920 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[5]Gt. Britain Parliamentary Papers Vol. XXXV, (1844). Emigration of Indian Labourers to the West Indies. P.2

[6]This policy of cash advances became controversial and several attempts were made to combat its ill effects.

[7]Port-Of-Spain Gazette, January 21, 1857. The letter of Mr. Thompson, Immigration Agent for Trinidad. This letter was laid before the Trinidadian Council of Government, and a resolution supporting the Secretary of State's decision to authorise the agents in India to give each laborer a gratuity of rupees five and a further advance of rupees ten before embarkation, was passed in the Council.

[8]Sanderson Committee Report. Evidence of Mr. Oliver William Warner, Emigration Agent in Calcutta and before that Assistant Protector in Trinidad. p.29.

[9]The Indian Emigrant, Vol.II, No. 7, February, 1916. The testimony of Jal Chamar, returned emigrant from Fiji, given to the Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta on August 25, 1915, pp. 207-208.

Several Hindi words interperse his testimony. Mehtar and Mehtrani are the male and female denominations respectively belonging to a low caste, traditionally responsible for waste cleaning etc. Dhotie, a traditional garment or piece of cloth covering the lower body, commonly worn by men. Kurta is a shirtlike upper garment also traditionally worn

by men. Sahib, in colonial times, referred mostly as a form of address (to someone in authority), to the British or any other white officials.

[10]Mohammed, "Social History of Post-indenture Migrants," p.68.

[11]Sanderson Committee Report. Testimony of Mr. William Morison, p.112.

[12]Ibid., p.112.

[13]Port-Of-Spain Gazette, 28 March, 1857. Editorial comment on the high mortality of "coolie" vessel Evelina.

[14]CO 318/261. 1871. W.J Palmer, surgeon, to the Protector of Immigrants.

[15]Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies - 1877-78. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1878. p. 2.

[16]Ibid., p. 2.

[17]See Table No. 6 for absolute mortality figures in the depot of Trinidad. See Table No. 7 for absolute figures on mortality in the depot of Guyana.

[18]See Table No. 8 for sex and age comparative of the percentage rate of mortality in the depots of Trinidad and Guyana.

[19]Ibid.

[20]CO 318/165. 1845. A letter from the Colonial Land and Emigration Office had this to say about the age that was considered adult: "We find that the age at which passengers are to be reckoned as adults is fixed at 10 years, instead of fourteen years as named in the British Passengers Act. We are well aware that natives of tropical climates maybe considered to become adult at an earlier age than Europeans....We earnestly hope that the limit may not be placed below 12 years." It is not known whether their recommendation of raising the age from 10 to 12 was followed or not.

[21]See Table No. 9 for mortality figures for Trinidad and Guyana according to age and sex (13 year period 1878-1892).

[22]Ibid.

[23]Maharani's oral recounting to Mahabir in The Still Cry, p.80.

[24]Mahabir's translation. See The Still Cry, p.190.

[25]K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labor, pp.78-103.

[26]The Indian Emigrant. Vol.1, No. 5, Dec. 1914, p. 144..

[27]K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labour, pp.84-87.

[28]Gt. Britain Parliamentary Papers Vol.XLVII, No.314. (1874) Note on Emigration From India by J. Geoghehan (henceforth, The Geoghehan Report), p.29.

[29]Annual Reports on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, 1876-1921 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press)

[30]Sankar an ex-indentured worker's oral acount in The Still Cry, pp.154-55

[31]K. J. Grant, My Missionary Memories. (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Imperial Publishing Company Ltd., 1923), pp.72-73.

[32]Interview with Ms. Poonamma Armoogam conducted by me and Ms. Seeta Raman in Tunapuna, Trinidad in November, 1995.

[33]Mahabir, The Still Cry, p.81.

[34]Ex-indentured worker, Sankar's oral recording in The Still Cry, pp.155-156.

[35]Captain and Mrs. Jane Swinton, Journal of a Voyage with Coolie Emigrants from Calcutta to Trinidad (London: Alfred Bennett, 1859), p.1.

[36]James Carlile was a prominent member of the Anti-Slavery Society in Britain.

[37]Otto Wenkstern ed., Letters on Coolie Emigration to the West Indies (London: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, 1859), p.23.

[38]See Table 10: Mortality on Ships leaving Calcutta for the West Indies 1856-57.

[39]The Geoghehan Report, p.25.

[40]Ibid., p.29.

[41]C.O. 384/124. 1879.

[42]Annual Report on Emigration From the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies 1878-79.

[43]C.O. 384/124. 1879.

[44]Rule 25 provided that in cases of emergency, when the proportion of females could not be completed, the emigration agent had to report the deficiency and the manner in which it would be resolved for government approval before a ship could embark. See Annual Emigration

Report from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies 1880-1881.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

[47]See Table No. 11 for comparative mortality figures on ships embarked from the Port of Calcutta.

[48]See Table No.12 and 12A for rates of mortality aboard ships traveling to British Guiana and Trinidad.

[49]See Table 11.

[50]See for instance, The Port-Of-Spain Gazette for the years between 1857 and 1859.

[51]The Daily Chronicle, 21 January,1905.

[52]See Table No. 13: Births at Sea for British Guiana 1871-1890.

[53]See Table No 14: Births at Sea for Trinidad 1881-1891.

[54]C.O. 318/264. 1872.

[55]The entire case is reported in great detail in the official despatches on emigration. See C.O. 384/109. Vol.II, 1876.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Interview of Mahadaye Ramsewak, daughter of ex-indentured worker Maharani by Patricia Mohammad. Tape No. OP-62, #31 & 32 /UWI-OPREP. The University of West Indies Oral History Project. Also my interview with Ms. Poonamma Armoogam.

The evolution and maintenance of jahaji relationships amongst Indian workers on plantations and villages is discussed in Gerad I. M. Tikasingh, "The Establishment of the Indians in Trinidad, 1870-1900" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 1973).

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN AND WORK - THE PUBLIC[1] DOMAIN OF THE SUGAR PLANTATIONS

> Every man e bound
> must wuk
> if e nah do it
> going jail...[2]

Women and men were first and foremost caneworkers (at least in the eyes of the planters and the colonial bureaucracy). From two recent and exhaustive studies of the indentureship system we know details of the working of the plantation economy under this system.[3] However, we still know little of the ways in which the presence of women indentured and non-indentured workers impacted the working of the plantation economy. This chapter shows how the presence of a stable proportion of female workers on the sugar plantations had important repercussions for the production and reproduction of the sugar economy in Trinidad and Guyana between 1845 and 1917.

Two important aspects of female presence in the plantation workforce are set forth in this chapter. First, in the retelling of the material working of the sugarcane economy, I have provided a quantitative (statistical) description of the extent and manner of female participation in the economy. Second, in a bid to go beyond a mere exposition of how many women worked or what kinds of jobs they did, I also look at the politics of gender as it played out in the allocation of work and wages, and in the formation of ethnic and class relations on plantations. Over time, as the

indentureship system matured, I argue that women, mostly "wives" lost out, in unsaid but nevertheless shared patriarchal pacts between male European management and male Indian laborers, over questions of wages and work. Additionally, this female presence belonging to one ethnic group, critically marked the dynamics of power both internally, within the Indian group of workers, but also externally with male members of other ethnic groups who were located at different levels of the plantation hierarchy. The dynamics of power relations, the negotiations and confrontations between competing patriarchies (Indian male workers on the one side, and the male European management on the other), are some aspects of plantation working class ethos which had a direct bearing on the overall working of the economy. The presence of Indian women workers also had important implications for changing the nature of Indian impact on the plantation society. The Indian immigrant workers to use Look Lai's term, changed from "sojourners to settlers"[4] - a process in which gender played a critical role in shaping social and ethnic relations. Reproduction of labor, considered important for a stable and growing economy, became a crucial factor in expanding the labor base, increasing settler immigrant Indian population and creating a dominant new ethnic rural group which would play a dynamic role in the agricultural developments of both Trinidad and Guyana long after the abolition of the system of immigration that had brought them from different shores.

The Plantation Sugar Economy: A Gender Perspective

All immigrant female and male laborers to Trinidad and Guyana were indentured to sugar plantations for a fixed period of five years. The duration of the indentureship contract went through several experiments with shorter termed agreements between employers and workers, but it was only after the term got fixed in 1862 at five years where the worker was bound to one employer for that period, did the system acquire regularity and a controlled supply of labor for the plantations.[5]

After the completion of their term of contract by which they were required to do all agricultural work assigned to them including compulsory residency in barracks situated on plantation lands, they had the option of either reindenturing for another five years on a plantation of their choice or taking the return passage to India after a minimum of 10 years residence in the colony had been completed.[6] The policies of reindentures and return passage underwent important changes. While reindentures of one or even five years were entered into with time-expired workers, this system collapsed after 1875 in both Trinidad and Guyana and one of the reasons cited was the increase in the fee required to be paid by planters.[7] Similarly, the right of a guaranteed return passage to India for all male and female indentured workers who had completed their agricultural residence on plantations, went through policy changes which reflect, to a certain degree, the concerns of the bureaucracy shifting from worker protectionism

to practical economic concerns. After 1870, as a means to reduce the cost of immigration on the public exchequer as well as to keep labor more permanently in the two countries, the planters gave both male and female workers land in lieu of their right to a free passage back. By 1894, this policy was discontinued, and the workers had to pay a part of the money towards the return passage. For male workers the proportion of money to be paid got fixed at one-half, while for the female immigrants it was fixed at one-third of the cost of the return passage to India.[8]

By the time the indentureship system was abolished in 1917, it was estimated by a special committee of Pillai, Tivary, and Keatinge inquiring into the working of the system, that of the total number of Indians in Guyana about 53 percent lived on the sugar estates, while the remaining 47 percent resided in the neighboring villages but most men and women from these areas also worked part-time on the plantations as task gangs. They concluded that about 75 percent of the Indians were directly or indirectly connected with the sugar industry even after the abolition of indentureship in 1917.[9] Sugar was the chief contributor to the exports of Guyana and remained the most important industry in the period under study. Approximately 33 percent of the total population of Guyana was directly engaged with the working of the sugar economy, while almost 50 percent were connected indirectly to it.[10] Similar trends prevailed in Trinidad as well. By the census of 1921 (a few years after

the abolition of indentureship), 26 percent of the total population was directly linked to agriculture. Proportionally, Indians formed the largest group engaged in sugar production.[11] In the period between 1863 and 1875 for instance, of the total labor resident on Trinidad estates, approximately 75 percent were indentured Indian workers, while about 25 percent were ex-indentured workers.[12]

As noted in Chapter Two, the proportion of female emigrant workers to Trinidad and Guyana fluctuated between 35% to 40% of the total workers emigrating from India with contracts of indenture in the period under study. The female workers like their male co-workers, were required by contract to do agricultural activity on plantations for a fixed period of five years. This term of indentureship got reduced for female workers from five to three years by the Ordinance of 1894.[13] However in the early decades of the indentureship system, officials concerned more with tapping a regular and controllable supply of labor, paid scant attention to gender differences in the labor supply. The terms of work drawn out in the contracts of indenture therefore did not specify or allocate the nature of agricultural work on plantations according to gender. Such gendered allocation of agricultural work and wages was resorted to by the managers and overseers who allocated underemunerative and unskilled work to women. The terms of the indentured contracts which all male and female emigrants were by law required to sign were identical, and for legal and theoretical purposes, gender blind. The

Sanderson Committee which did a detailed inquiry in 1910 into the working of the indentureship system, questioned Alleyne Ireland who lived on sugar estates of Guyana for two years to study the administration and working of the Immigration laws relating to labor on plantations. On being asked about the hours and nature of work assigned to Indian women by Mr. Ashley of the Committee, this is what Ireland could recall:

> Are the hours of labour for women, who come in a certain proportion, I believe, to the men, restricted anymore than the hours for men? My recollection on that point is not very clear. I am not sure that they are. I could not be sure of that, but I do not think they are....I know they have quite different tasks, of course.
>
> Are those different tasks laid down by regulations?
> No; but on the estate in practice you would not put a woman at shovel work, for instance, and they have light work such as weeding, and keeping the irrigation and drains clear.
>
> I am not suggesting it is so, but therefore, in theory a woman could be put to do the same amount of manual labour as a man?
> I do not think that is the case....
>
> I think the hours of labour are not different?
> Yes; but I do not think the character of the labour is the same....[14]

In 1854, there were 675 female indentured workers out of 4577 adult indentured workers resident on all the sugar estates of Trinidad, comprising a mere 14.75 percent of the indentured workers. By 1910 the numbers of both male and female indentured workers resident on sugar plantations had dramatically increased to a total of 11,551 adult indentured workers of whom 3,305 were female, doubling to approximately

29 percent of the total adult indentureds on plantations of Trinidad.[15]

Table 4.1: Breakdown by sex of indentured and unindentured Indian labor on sugar estates of Trinidad.

Year	Indentured		Unindentured Resident	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1854	3,902	675		
1862	7,131	2,498	1,308	430
1863	7,593	2,479	1,481	565
1864	7,445	2,342	1,577	603
1865	7,374	2,125	1,727	756
1866	8,905	2,002	2,136	899
1867	7,132	2,358	2,022	825
1868	6,995	2,448	2,205	842
1869	7,514	2,697	2,332	946
1870	7,207	3,040	2,755	1,201
1871	7,437	3,179	3,017	1,254
1872	7,644	3,353	3,399	1,400
1873	7,838	3,345	3,715	1,579
1874	7,770	3,340	3,743	1,630
1875	7,652	3,120	3,767	1,778
1876	7,152	2,905	4,057	1,858
1877	6,675	2,184	4,310	2,027
1878	6,281	2,566	4,279	2,095
1879	6,639	2,612	3,861	2,116
1890	7,252	2,708	5,160	2,718
1910	8,246	3,305	6,953	3,657

Source: Compiled from C.O. 295/187, 1855; C.O. 384/118, 1878; C.O. 384/124, 1879; C.O. 384/129, 1880; C.O. 384/109, 1876. Also Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p.281.

The above table reveals some interesting trends in the composition of Indian laboring classes on plantations in Trinidad in the period between 1854 and 1910. Although statistics for every year are not available, the overall picture that emerges for this period is that there was a steady increase in both male and female indentured and ex-indentured workers through the means of both continued immigration and settlement. The continuing presence of females on plantations both under indentureship and after the expiration of their indentures reflect on two important conditions of their entry into Trinidad. First, female labor continued to be recruited in India and brought through the system of indentureship in steady numbers. Second, Indian women continued to remain tied to plantation work even after the expiration of their indentures as is evidenced by their steadily increasing numbers as unindentured or free workers resident on plantations. As the above table shows, the number of unindentured female workers in 1910 were infact more than the numbers of indentured female workers. Indian women therefore did not necessarily withdraw in large numbers from wage earning plantation work after the expiration of their indentures to focus on work in the domestic peasant economic sector alone.

The low but stable proportional presence of female indentured and non indentured workers on sugar estates did not however change the basic organizational patterns of the plantations. They remained male centered, not just in terms of

absolute numbers of male laborers, but also in terms of the power dynamics of plantation class relations. Power remained critically entrenched in male hands as all dominant rural groups like overseers, drivers, managers, and planters were primarily male. However, these stable figures do tell us an important hidden story, with important implications for the sugar economy and plantation society. Unlike Chinese immigration undertaken in the same era,[16] which remained primarily male, Indian immigration to the Caribbean departed quite radically by bringing in a steady stream of female immigrant workers, which explains the increasing proportion of indentured female workers on plantations. Despite constant struggles faced in India, immigration authorities never put a stop to female migration. On the contrary, officials and planters continued to pressure recruiters to bring larger numbers of females. Since this indentured migration was dictated directly by the economic impulses of maximizing profits and controlling labor costs, women's agricultural work had to be perceived as valuable for the plantation authorities to encourage continued immigration of female workers. A planter in Guyana wrote to The Colonist in 1881, extolling the value of female immigrant labor:

> The government has a great control over the immigration of Asiatics, and could insist on a larger proportion of women or a smaller proportion of men....If an equal number of sexes came they would very likely form families and settle down and have no longer any wish to leave the country of their adoption. I for my part would be most happy,

> if possible to receive two or three large allotments of nothing but women.[17]

The plantation Indian working class sex ratio in Trinidad and Guyana show that although the ratio was skewed to the detriment of female workers, their presence in all forms of agricultural activity relating to sugar production remained stable and did not decline over time, even after the expiration of their indentureship contracts. According to the Census of 1891 For British Guiana, the total Indian population engaged in agricultural activity was 82,202. According to the census parameters of 1891, agricultural classes included not just the agricultural workers, both free and indentured, but also those members attending machinery and stocks, overseers, watchmen, and managers.[18] Of the 82,202 Indians engaged in agriculture, total females were 30,834 approximating about 37.5 percent of the total Indian presence in agriculture. The majority of this female presence in agriculture fell in the category of agricultural laborers, who formed the lowest agrarian class on plantations. There were approximately 30,746 Indian female agricultural laborers, representing a staggering 99.7 percent of the total Indian females engaged in agriculture.[19] It is evident from these statistics that the position of female workers on agricultural estates (sugar and other products) was located at the lowest margins of all agrarian classes present on plantations. Very few females of any ethnic group ever got promoted to the position of drivers, overseers or managers.[20]

In Trinidad similarly, the total Indian (counting only natives from India and not inclusive of those born in Trinidad), presence in all agricultural activity in 1891 was 40,902 and dropped in 1911 to 38,267. Agricultural classes, according to census authorities in Trinidad included in addition to free and indentured laborers, contractors, cane farmers, drivers, gardeners, managers of sugar, coconut, cocoa and other agricultural estates, overseers, peasant proprietors, stockkeepers and watchmen. In 1891, there were 14,131 Indian females engaged in varied agricultural activities, approximating 34.5 percent of the total Indians (natives of India only), in Trinidadian agriculture. Of these females, following almost identical trends as Guyana, an overwhelming 98.7 percent belonged to the class of agricultural laborers.[21] While the 1901 census of Trinidad did not give separate statistical accounts for the Indians, it showed a general increase of 11.4 percent for males and a 9.98 percent increase for females engaged in agricultural activity over the previous period.[22] In 1911, there were a total of 11,926 Indian (not inclusive of those born in Trinidad) females out of the total of 38,267 Indians present in agriculture, representing approximately 31.2 percent of the total Indians engaged in agricultural activity.[23] The status of females, like the majority of Indian male workers in agriculture, in the entire period for which figures are available did not see any radical improvement. They remained as disempowered as they had been when they were first brought

from India in the 1840s, located even after some seventy odd years, at the bottom of the agrarian plantation society. In 1911, for instance, female laborers formed approximately 94.5 percent of the total Indian females in agriculture.[24] Very few ever became drivers or overseers who enjoyed some powers over the mass of agricultural workers, both indentured and free.[25]

Agricultural activity in both Trinidad and Guyana in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries centered on the cultivation of the sugarcane crop and the manufacture of sugar and its by products. Trinidad and Guyana, tied closely to the fortunes of British imperial trade, produced sugar for European consumption.[26] The working of the sugar plantation economy and the organization of its labor in the period between 1845 and 1917 was neither unchanging nor stable. Sugar, an export cash crop for Trinidad and Guyana, was tied to the vicissitudes of a global economy, particularly to the changing nature and fortunes of the inter-colonial trade and metropolitan British interests. In the period immediately following emancipation, sugar planters saw their production decline steadily.[27] With the establishment of a regulated supply of indentured laborers from India and China sugar production in Trinidad and Guyana recovered from the early 1850s to the mid 1880s after which the West Indian sugar economy went through another series of depressions.[28]

Despite the vicissitudes of abandonment of estates after emancipation, partial recovery with the introduction of immigration, and a series of depressions in the sugar industry

in the British West Indies, by the turn of the century, sugar still remained the staple crop of the region, and continued to dominate the economy of Trinidad and Guyana.

Table 4.2 Value of total exports and sugar exports, 1896.

Colony	Total Exports (in Sterling Pound)	Exports of Sugar Products (in Sterling Pound)	% of Sugar Exports in Total exports
British Guiana	1,814,000	1,280,000	70.5%
British Guiana (excl. gold)	1,353,000	1,280,000	94.5%
Trinidad	1,363,000	773,000	57%

Source: West India Royal Commission, p. 165.

Despite the swings in the fortunes of the sugar economy, little effort was expended by planters to make any major technological changes in the industry or rationalize the system of land and labor use. The manufacture of sugar, therefore remained labor intensive with tasks ranging from hauling punts, feeding the mills, driving the engine and curing the sugar done by estate labor. The larger, more prosperous estates did make some technological improvements, particularly in the manufacturing part of the sugar economy operations.[29] While work inside "the buildings" or the mills was primarily male, not a few women chose to do the heavier and complicated jobs in the mills to earn more money. Drying and carrying megass was done primarily by the women and children.[30]

While the labor contracts signed by Indian men and women did not specify the nature of agricultural tasks that they

would be required to undertake on sugar plantations, in the allotment of work, the overseers and managers of the estates frequently assigned tasks according to gender, relegating the low paying, unskilled jobs like weeding and watering to the women workers. Geoghehan in his parliamentary report of 1874 notes, "We have been passing fields of young cane, and the light gangs, consisting of women and weakly men are weeding among them. On their arrival at an estate the emigrants are divided into the shovel gang and the weeding gang; the latter including the women and weaklier men."[31] The prevailing gender ideology on the plantations made sex the first marker of differentiation in agricultural work on the sugar estates, where the lowest paying work got assigned to women.

Such assumptions about the ability of workers according to their sex, was found by authorities reviewing the agricultural practices of plantations to be misdirected and ill informed. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary regarding the proposal being forwarded in certain government circles to classify emigrating workers according to strength and ability, Robert Mitchell, the Agent General of Immigrants had this to say in 1878:

> ...As to the classification in India of emigrants into able-bodied and non able-bodied (sic). However useful as a matter of general arrangement such classification maybe and satisfactory as a proof of the agent's care in recruiting and selection, it will be of little practical use as a measure of the emigrants' suitability in a new country....It is not the emigrant's actual physical power but his willingness to make the most of his changed circumstances that really constitutes him a

> first class man - valuable to himself and his employer. The biggest and brawniest who under a more despotic rule could be worked to the greatest advantage do not usually distinguish themselves as farm labourers.... *On the other hand, women who would naturally be classed as their inferiors if at all industriously inclined, work with wonderful steadiness and as more than once remarked by me with greater regularity than the men.*[32] (my emphasis)

D.W.D. Comins who came to study the indentureship system and its working in Trinidad and Guyana noted that although it took the "cooly" workers some time to learn to use agricultural implements like the cutlass, the shovel or the fork, it was not long before they were able to master them and completely dominate the agricultural operations on the estates. Comins observed that "...it is not uncommon to see the whole of the work of the mill, with the exception of driving the larger engines, done by coolies; and many cooly women work alongside the men and do full tasks in heavy work, such as loading canes in carts and trucks."[33] Comins in his diary entry gives a detailed description of a typical day's work on a sugar estate. Visiting the Woodbrook Estate owned by Messrs. W.F. Burnley and Company Ltd. located in Trinidad, he describes the daily routine of the agricultural work thus:

> Every week day at 6:15 a.m. the overseers and drivers go around to the barracks; the coolies are called out and assigned their tasks....The labourers go to their tasks, which are measured for them by the driver....The overseer has several gangs under him for ploughing, manuring, collecting fodder, all of which he visits in turn. The task-work people generally take their food to the field with them, or, when working near their houses, come home to eat....Cooking for the day is generally done very early in the morning, say

> from 4 a.m. The babies and small children are looked after by a woman, who is paid by estate 10 cents per day, while the parents are in the field - the tasks are generally done by 2 p.m.; those that have not finished by that time or 3:30 p.m. leave their task till next day of their own accord...Women, when they ask for them, are given the same tasks and wages as men.[34]

A day's work on plantations routinely lasted 7 to 8 hours starting early in the morning around 6:30 P.M. and ending around 3:30 or 4 P.M. by which time the assigned task had to be completed. However, on some plantations driven by hard bargaining managers or overseers, it was not uncommon for them to drive the laborers to much longer hours in the sugar mills. One such case was noted by the magistrate of Demerara,[35] George William Des Vouex in his letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

> I have reason for believing, though the fact is concealed from the Authorities, that it is no uncommon practice to enforce from the immigrants (inspite of the law) from 16 to 20 hours' work in the sugar house. In proof I may mention that a part proprietor of several large estates, Mr. Quintin Hogg (a partner in the firm of Bosanquet, Curtis and Co,) expresses to me, during his visit to Demerara last year, his horror at finding that the immigrants on one of his estates, had been for some days worked 22 hours per day, and added that the manager was aggrieved at his interference in ordering the employment of relays. It is hardly possible to conceive that human nature could have stood so severe a strain, and the time may have been exaggerated, but in as much as the statement, as coming from a proprietor, was in the nature of a confession, it could hardly have been far from the truth.[36]

Almost all field work was allotted and paid by tasks and not by hours of work, so that often the worker would not be

paid if, despite putting in as many hours as the others, was unable to finish the assigned task for the day. Pregnant women workers, or those who were ill lost wages frequently in this manner. The statement of Bechu, an indentured worker, to the West India Royal Commission looking into the crisis in the sugar industry in 1898 confirms that task work that was assigned was often unfair, "Although it is optional for indentured immigrants to take task work they are forced to accept it, and the terms fixed by employers are so hard that it is often the case that a task cannot be completed in less than two days, thus making it impossible for an indentured coolie from earning a shilling per diem."[37]

The plantation hierarchy functioned to maximize the returns from each unit of labor, where the interests and welfare of the individual laborers was of little interest. An editorial on the system of indentured labor immigration in the San Fernando Gazette sharply criticized the power dynamics on plantations, which according to the writer worked to the detriment of the workers. As the writer pointed out:

> Now it is in the interest of the driver to please the overseer; of the overseer to please the manager; of the manager to please the proprietor, whose sensibilities cannot be affected by what takes place, he being thousands of miles away. But the only way to please all parties is to squeeze as much labour, at the lowest cost, from the labourer, so as to produce the ton of sugar with the least expense. From the lowest to the highest, therefore, in the hierarchy of absenteeism, every interest is strongly linked against the poor, miserable wretch whom they have all come to look upon as chattels of less value than the mules of the estate.[38]

The burden of work on female workers was heavy, as they not only had to work on the cane fields from early morning to evening, but also had the added responsibility of taking care of the children and preparing the family meals.[39] As Sara Morton discovered on her rounds of missionary work amongst the Indian workers and noted in her diary:

> these people have their own trials; there are women and girls who work in the cane-field everyday in the week in the dry season, rising at two or three o'clock in the morning to cook the food they take with them and returning between four and five o'clock to cook the evening meal and, perhaps, to look for the fuel first.[40]

Quite the opposite picture was painted by the official reports which made special note of the care with which pregnant and nursing women workers were treated on plantations. Geoghehan for instance writes in 1874:

> Pregnant women are always treated with consideration. From an elaborate examination of paylists and registers of birth, they show that women with child almost invariably leave work three or four months before their time, and that if the child lives, they do not return to work within from six months to a year afterwards....As soon as the attention of the mother can be dispensed with, she is generally 'warned to go to work'.[41]

Comins made similar observations regarding the status of pregnant women workers. The dynamics of work, wages, and cost of living on sugar estates, particularly true for indentured workers however, tell a story which departs radically from the picture painted by these official observers of the system. A woman, according to official observers is "never compelled" by employers to work during pregnancy, yet there was no formal

leave entitlement that women workers enjoyed and nothing in the contract allowed them maternity leave. Women, from the legal point of view therefore, had necessarily to break their contracts of work if they absented themselves from the cane fields. This left them in a position that was vulnerable to abuse by overseers and drivers of the estates.

George W. Des Vouex a magistrate in Demerara from 1863 to 1869, send a detailed letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, highlighting the problems that immigrant laborers faced on plantations. In the light of serious disturbances on plantation Leonara and the widespread discontentment amongst the Indian and Chinese immigrant workers, he sought to bring to the notice of the British imperial government what he considered to be the chief causes for the disaffection and made several recommendations for improvement of the system. He noted in his letter, of the particular problems that pregnant and nursing women workers faced on plantations:

> There are some well known Managers who give out publicly that immigrants on their Estates shall always, during the hours of work, either actually at work, or in the hospital, or in gaol; a rule which undoubtedly be enforced by the strict letter of the law, but which, invariably and rigorously carried out, inflicts extreme hardship in many individual instances, especially in the case of women who are *enciente* or nursing young children.[42]

Des Vouex goes on to cite one particular encounter that he had, while on magistrate's duty, with a manager of an estate, "A manager was once highly indignant with me for refusing to punish for neglect to perform the ordinary task of work. A

woman who pleaded her delicate condition in this respect, and was evidently by her appearance, near her confinement."[43] In response to the serious allegations against the plantation bureaucracy, including immigration agents, medical officers, planters and their managers, a Commission of Enquiry was set up to look into the working of the Chinese and Indian labor immigration. The Emigration Board reported in 1871, that with respect to Des Vouex's allegations of ill-treatment of pregnant and nursing women workers, "the commissioners state that having enquired into the case it appeared that Mr.Des Vouex's recollection was imperfect."[44] After 1875, both Trinidad and Guyana provided for pregnant women workers to legitimately absent themselves from work even up to ten months.[45] However, even with such legal stipulations, this regulation was often broken by either the plantation management or the working women themselves. The table below shows the comparative figures for still births amongst Indians in Trinidad at the turn of the century, and even as of 1911, the rate of still births amongst Indians was higher than the rate in the general population of Trinidad. The harsh work regimen on the plantations, and the extreme poverty of the workers were a factor in this high rate of mortality.

A memorandum submitted by Indian agricultural workers to the West India Royal Commission in 1898 confirmed the vulnerability of women workers to abuses of power. Testifying against the rules and regulations governing the lives and labor of Indian workers, the memorandum noted, "The law also

presses our women with undue severity. If a woman is unable to work through any disorder of health peculiar to her sex, she is not exempted, but liable to prosecution at the will and pleasure of the manager or overseer."[46] More than forty years after Geoghehan first reported favorably on the status of pregnant women workers, another official committee reviewing the condition of Indian workers in Trinidad and Guyana, the McNeill Lal Commission recommended improvements and described conditions which approximated the reality of these women workers more accurately. In their 1915 report the McNeill Lal Committee recommended:

> ...During advanced pregnancy and childbirth a woman should be entitled both to remain idle and to receive free rations or diet ordered by a medical officer. The whole period should not be less than four months and might advantageously extend to six months. There is on and off estates considerable mortality among children under one year. In the Trinidad Indian community generally the proportion of still-births is very high. A woman is never compelled by her employer to work when she is pregnant, or has recently delivered, but unless her husband is an exceptionally good worker her earnings will be a consideration, and she may easily continue too long at work before delivery and recommence work too soon afterwards.[47]

Although female participation in plantation agriculture was considered valuable by planters and officials, nevertheless women workers felt the burden of gender stereotypes in the allocation of work and remuneration. Female workers could do the same tasks as men but did not get these better paying tasks automatically. Those women who wanted to earn more had to negotiate and sometimes confront the managers

and overseers for allocation of the heavier tasks.[48] Although the wages for adult indentured workers was guaranteed by written agreement at a minimum rate of 25 cents (one shilling and 1/2 dime), this stipulation was subject to arbitrary changes.[49] In the aftermath of the depression in the sugar economy in the West Indies, the Immigration Ordinance No. 18 of 1891 of British Guiana specified that "able bodied" indentured adults were to receive not less than 24 cents per day and other, "non able bodied" indentured adults to receive not less than 16 cents. Similarly, the Immigration Ordinance of 1899 for Trinidad specified that an "able bodied" adult indentured immigrant was to receive not less than one shilling and one half penny per day, and any indentured worker other than "able bodied" was to receive not less than eight pence. The allocation of wages based on the classification of workers into "able bodied" and "other" in these ordinances opened up areas for manipulation by the plantation management largely to the detriment of female workers who were considered "non able bodied."[50]

While most workers were paid by task, there were some better paying categories of agricultural work which was paid fortnightly or weekly and reserved exclusively for skilled "able bodied" workers. Grooms, watchmen, stockkeepers, carpenters, blacksmiths, drivers etc. were usually paid at rates of wages which exceeded the average rates of agricultural work by almost 50% to 100%. Heavy tasks in the sugar manufacturing mills were also better remunerated.[51]

These agricultural tasks prized by all workers were allotted by overseers and managers in the manner they thought fit. It was in these allocations that women workers generally lost out, as overseers and managers, under the influence of prevailing patriarchal assumptions, relegated women to the category of non skilled, non "able bodied" worker. Agricultural census statistics of 1891 for British Guiana, for instance shows that there were no female workers attending machinery or working as watchmen and there were only 20 female stock keepers and 21 overseers.[52] Similarly, the Trinidadian census of 1911 shows that there were no overseers, managers, stockkeepers, drivers or watchmen amongst the Indian female workers. There were only 13 female cane contractors and 33 cane farmers in 1911.[53]

Payment of wages according to task per day very often also resulted in non-payment if the overseer felt that the task had not been adequately completed or if the worker could not finish it the same day. Wages were paid fortnightly, but in some estates it was not paid before three weeks. Provision shops were often maintained by managers, or overseers on estate grounds, and sometimes workers were given credit slips in lieu of wages which they had to use in the shops. This practice pushed many workers into forced indebtedness and dependent on the powers and goodwill of the estate managers and overseers. Comins, who found little wrong generally with the system of indentureship as it operated in Trinidad and Guyana, however commented on the evils of such indebtedness of

workers. Highlighting the problems associated with arbitrary payment of wages on some estates he noted:

> I find that it is not a uncommon custom for the estate not to pay the full wages owing the cooly on pay day, but to keep in hand a week's pay as a guarantee for good behaviour and regular work....This is called "trust money". Arbitrary arrangements of this sort are not in accordance with the ordinances. The principle of having no stoppages or arrears carrying over the next pay day is one to be followed. If the wages were paid regularly every saturday, as in most well managed estates, there would be no occasion for the issue by the managers of "good", "bons" slips of paper for advances of money due as wages or for the purchase of articles at the shop, to be redeemed by deduction from wages at the next pay. The benefits of such a system are not on the side of the labourers....The keeping of shops by managers or estate drivers or headmen should be strongly discouraged.[54]

The random and arbitrary ways in which the structure of wages was determined on different estates made it impossible to gauge how and why the wages changed over time, if they changed at all. Not only did macro market forces like the sugar crisis of the 1880s determine the wages that a worker would get, but non economic and subjective methods resorted to by overseers and managers also greatly differentiated the remunerations of workers. None of the different inquiry committees that visited Trinidad and Guyana at different periods of the operation of the indentureship system could give an accurate or confident average rate of wages that could be applied to all estates and all workers.[55] According to the McNeill Lal Committee which visited the two countries in 1913-14, the average wage for an adult indentured male worker was

about 4 shillings and 3 pence per week, while the average earning of an adult female worker was normally less, approximating about one-half, to two-thirds of the wages of the male immigrant worker.[56]

The Committee of Tivary, Pillai and Keatinge which visited Guyana several years after McNeill and Lal in 1924, noted the difficulties which they encountered in calculating an average rate of wages:

> Field-labourers in British Guiana are paid by piece-work; wages, therefore are not fixed but depend upon so many variable factors that the earnings of one group of labourers differ from those of another, though both may be engaged on similar tasks. They fluctuate from season to season; and even in the same season, from week to week on account of variation in the weather. Then all tasks are not paid for at the same rate; neither is the working capacity of two men alike....Over and above all these factors, is the consideration whether at any given moment the supply of labour exceeds the demand and vice versa. The above causes are purely economic, but even on the sugar estates which are, as we were repeatedly told, 'not philanthropic institutions, but business concerns run on business lines,' *the human factor does to an extent modify the action of economic forces, and in no small measure determines the amount of earnings. It arises from differences among the managers, overseers and other subordinate staff in temperament, the sense of humanity, and an appreciation of what is due to labour; and is partly responsible for variation in wages.*[57] (my emphasis)

Task allocation, wages, and hours of work in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors of the sugar industry were regulated by the immigration ordinances[58] that governed the life and labor of immigrant workers. Yet, in many respects these stipulated rules and regulations were often times

manipulated by individual managers and overseers. The laborers had legal recourse to appeals in the courts and file complaints to magistrates and the Protector of Immigrants. But as voiced by Des Vouex, and reported frequently in the contemporary press, the balance of power and the influence of the planters was so ubiquitous, that the laborer often experienced miscarriages of justice.[59]

Indian women workers remained a small but important segment of the laboring classes on sugar plantations. Their numbers steadily increased over the period under study and their proportional representation in the agricultural working class remained stable, fluctuating between 20 percent to 25 percent. The cost of bringing immigrant female workers from India was higher than the cost per male worker emigrating from India.[60] Yet, in official and plantation circles this migration was considered important for varied reasons. The governor of Trinidad, in a letter attached to the population report prepared by H.I. Clark appealed in 1890 for larger numbers of women immigrants even at a greater cost:

> I am well aware that there is great difficulty in obtaining *respectable* women as immigrants, but I should be glad if an attempt could be made even at an increased cost to the colony to secure that a larger proportion of females should in future be imported into Trinidad.[61]

While some officials felt that a minimum ratio of women immigrants had to be maintained to keep social stability amongst the Indians, yet others felt that women's work on sugar estates was under appreciated and was infact more steady

and valuable than some male workers. By the early 1880s when the indentureship system had set roots in Trinidad and Guyana, and the sugar plantations facing a series of economic depressions were cutting costs and trimming their economies of scale, women workers provided yet another avenue of speculation for possible expansion and long term benefit for West Indian sugar production. It was increasingly felt in plantation circles, that encouragement should be actively provided to the Indian immigrant workers to set up families, become settler societies living in close proximity to the sugar estates and thereby provide an expanding labor base for the planters to tap into without having to take recourse to expensive schemes of large-scale immigration. In a bid to bring in more women workers from India, particularly "respectable" ones, it was felt that the duration of indentureship should be reduced from five to three years.

The reduction of indentureship from five to two years for women workers was first recommended by D.W.D. Comins in 1891. The term of reduction finally agreed upon was three years and this became law by the Ordinance of 1894.[62] Comins reflecting the general opinion of plantation authorities on the question of reduction of indentureship contracts for women reported:

> The opinion held here is that although 5 years' indenture is unnecessary in the case of women, it would not be desirable to do away with the indenture of women altogether. If they were not indentured at all, they would never learn to work; but having once been initiated into the use of implements, and having been accustomed to regular work, their husbands may be trusted not to allow them to

> remain idle - emptiers, not fillers, of the family purse. For this purpose a two years' indenture would be sufficient.[63]

Even after the term of indentureship was reduced, female workers continued to work on the sugar estates. However this reduction of term, as it played out in the twenty years after its promulgation, was not viewed too favorably by the same plantation authorities who had earlier approved of Comins' scheme. What Comins had hoped to achieve - namely to bring in larger numbers of women, particularly "respectable" women from India and facilitate migration of families to the West Indies had not happened in the manner projected by him in 1891. Those directly connected with the immigration of indentured workers testified to the Sanderson Committee in 1910 about the difficulties that had arisen since the reduction of the term of indentureship for women. William Morison, overseer, manager and part proprietor in Guyana from 1875 to 1906 complained:

> A woman is really free after three years. That is another thing which has not been working well. A woman is indentured now for 3 years indenture and 2 years residence on the estate. There have been cases where a woman went off the estate with another man...and the planter could do nothing....She is indentured and she is not indentured.[64]

McNeil and Lal, reviewing the system a few years later in 1915, concurred with Morison, and felt that there was some divergence of opinion about the reduction of the term of indenture for women workers. In colonial official minds it was clear that even after two decades of its working it did not radically "improve" the class of women immigrants brought in,

nor did it facilitate any large-scale migration of families from India.

Whatever may have been the opinions and male assumptions about women's work and the duration of their contract, female workers continued to work for wages even beyond the abolition of the indentureship system in 1917. They continued to do agricultural work into the middle of the twentieth century. From J.D. Tyson's report, published in 1939, we know that even two decades after the abolition of the system, amongst the 35,964 Indian agricultural workers, there were 11,326 female workers forming 31.49 percent of the total Indian agricultural workers.[65] Clearly women did not disappear from the sugar plantations and continued to work as indentured and ex-indentured laborers. Even after the reduction of their terms of indenture, they continued to work. As Oliver William Warner, Assistant Protector in Trinidad for 12 years reported to the Sanderson Committee in 1910, "...Many of the women like to work because they like to make money too; they are very ambitious."[66]

By the mid 1870s when indentured immigration had become the most important tool of labor appropriation by the Guyanese and Trinidadian sugar economies, official and plantation opinions on women workers became more focused and appraisal of their worth and prospective role in the production process came in for scrutiny. There was dilemma in colonial circles as to the roles that women should have on plantations. Were they to be seen as cane workers primarily, like their male co-

workers and regulated accordingly, or should they be seen as spouses of male workers as well and regulated thus? Most agreed that women's work was as, if not more, valuable as men's labor. It was never argued by any official or planter that the migration of women should cease completely, especially since they often saw these women workers as the major source of social instability and immorality on plantations. Nor were they to remain at home attending to their children and husbands. As their experience with Indian indentured labor grew, the colonial state and the planters recognized the advantages of encouraging the formation of stable families and emphasizing the role of women immigrants as wives as well as workers on the plantations. This would mean not only a stable social order, more easily governable, but would also encourage reproduction of labor which would benefit the sugar estates in the long run. On being asked by the Sanderson Committee if it would be wise to bring in more women immigrant workers even at a greater cost, Warner suggested that instead of destroying the estates, such importation would eventually be for the benefit of the sugar industry, for it would increase the population and therefore reduce the dependency of the estates on the costly scheme of immigration. Over the long term, with a large labor base located and dependent on the fortunes of sugar, indentured immigration could even be abolished.[67]

While women continued to put in equal hours of work on the sugar estates, what changed over time was the way in which

planters and the colonial state saw these female workers. Increasingly, they started to be seen not only as valuable to the production but also to the reproduction of the economy, and for such purposes settlement close to the estates and family life was encouraged. Different colonial observers of the indentureship system recommended that women should get adequate leave during pregnancy and be provided with nursing facilities while at work on the estates. The Marriage and Divorce Ordinance of 1881 for Trinidad and The Ordinance No. 18 of 1891 for Guyana was passed to legalize and register all unions between men and women that had hitherto not been recognized.[68] Most significantly, the family was eventually becoming an unit for regulation of work and wages on the estates. Although the organization of labor on sugar plantations was contracted and regulated on an individual basis, the family's labor was actively incorporated into different agricultural work.[69] This was advantageous to both the employer and the family as a whole, for the worker with a large family could hope to earn some extra money, offset though these earnings were by greater expenses of a large family. Warner noted in 1910:

> A man with a family of children is very well off, because little boys of 9 and 10 are generally employed in taking care of the stock...The boys get 6d. a day for that, so that a man with a family, if he has a grown up family particularly, is very well off indeed.[70]

As the Indian immigrant family evolved as a recognizable unit, it changed the power dynamics both internally and

externally. While it became common for the planters or their managers and overseers to exploit and appropriate the labor of the entire family including the children, it also over time subtly changed the internal rhythms and power equations within the household. The male head of household got a certain degree of control over the family's labor and alienated it in the manner thought best for the household. This was particularly true after the completion of their indenture contracts, when they were free to offer their labor in the manner they thought best suited their interests. Women's and children's labor was utilized, directed, and managed by the male head of household in subsistence production and minor surplus production for the market.[71]

As early as 1874, the annual immigration report for that year noted, "...it must not be overlooked that women now do little or no work during the early years or the whole engagement, but this breach of contract is usually overlooked by the employer when the husband is reasonably industrious."[72] Over time negotiations over wages and work shifted from individuals to the head of the family. In unwritten and unsaid but shared patriarchal pacts between white male management and Indian male laborers, women workers now not only alienated their labor, but also the proceeds of that labor. In certain plantation circles it was felt that women should work as they feared that a "woman who is not occupied otherwise than in cooking her husband's food is more likely to get into mischief." Several proprietors and managers, to back these

assumptions, stated that Indian men privately voiced such fears to them and hoped that women would be made to work. Over time, as settlement of workers increased and recognizable family units started appearing, if a women absented herself from work, the planters no longer negotiated punishments with the concerned woman but with her husband. As one report noted:

> On a majority of estates if a married woman who is physically fit and free to work absents herself from the field or does not care to work, *2 shillings are deducted from her husband's weekly pay-bill,* and refunded to him...only when she turns up on the field. Their point of view is... that everyone living on the estate must work.[73] (my emphasis).

With the passage of time, control over the use and abuse of a woman's labor power was passed to the male authority in the household by late nineteenth century. Another report discusses the apparent inability of plantation authorities to force women to work on fields, unless they were directed by their husband's to do so. This report observed, "average earnings for women varied greatly because women cannot be ordered to work after three years residence and secondly, throughout the five years of their indenture, the employer seldom uses pressure to exact work *except to reinforce the wishes of the husband.*"[74] (my emphasis) All regulations of a married woman's work were negotiated between the husband and the plantation authorities rather than with the women themselves. Thus clearly in the period when the indentureship system had achieved a certain maturity, and as more Indian women and men started settling down in Trinidad and Guyana as

permanent residents, and setting up recognizable households (whether married or not), the management too shifted its bargaining over wages and work to the male member of the household, in an unsaid but shared patriarchal pact.

Class, Ethnicity[75] and Gender: Power Dynamics on Plantations

Ethnic diversity and a class society based on ethnicity and race predated the arrival of Indian immigrant workers to the plantations of Trinidad and Guyana. Nineteenth century Trinidadian and Guyanese creole societies had evolved beyond the simple bifurcation of masters and slaves of the ertswhile slave based societies.[76] Afro-Trinidadians and Afro-Guyanese were increasingly moving to urban based professions and with greater access to education began to form a middle class in these two societies by the end of the nineteenth century. White European (primarily British) planters and colonial officers still formed the elite class and had hegemonic control over power in the entire period of this study. However, a significant portion of the ex-slaves remained tied to the land and were engaged in some of the more skilled agricultural work on the sugar estates.[77] It is this group of rural Afro-Caribbean workers and their relations and interactions with European planters, overseers, managers and with the new Indian immigrant workers that will be studied in this section. The large-scale importation of Indian immigrant workers to step into those areas of sugar production that the ex-slaves had either vacated, or where they fetched a higher wage, complicated the ethnic and class structure of plantation

society. Rural society at the time slavery was dominated by two classes which were also clearly divided along ethnic and race lines, namely the white European masters and the black African slaves. The importation of foreign labor, namely Chinese and Indians[78] after the abolition of slavery had some important implications for the way rural society evolved from the middle of the nineteenth century. While this new immigrant influx did not alter the dynamics of power in plantation society and economy, for power still remained entrenched in the class of masters, it did complicate the relations between the classes, and more importantly the peculiar nexus between labor and ethnicity in the two countries. As Sidney Mintz points out:

> ...the ability of the new migrant group to acculturate to some national (creole) model was somewhat restricted by the lack of social and economic mobility, and of political representation. Ethnicity in these Caribbean cases, then, is not a matter simply of cultural content, but also of the relations among different groups whose stakes are defined in good measure by external, imperial, and remote power.[79]

The influx of Chinese and Indian workers implicated the structure of rural society, particularly rural class formation and relations between Afro-Caribbeans and the new immigrants as they competed for the resources of the rural countryside on the one hand and grappled with the power play of the plantocracy on the other. The political economy of sugar and the vicissitudes of its labor needs and organization after emancipation were key factors in the changing dynamics of

Caribbean ethnicity. Mintz postulates this most clearly when he suggests that:

> ethnicity as an aspect of these developing Caribbean societies, then, was linked inseparably to the "crisis" attributable to dislocations in the labor supply created by revolution and emancipation. So far as the migrants themselves were concerned, it was a crisis produced not so much by change as by the *absence* of change. The ethnic identities of these populations were in this connection a coefficient of the political and economic rigidities of plantation economies.[80]

This is particularly important as in the period between 1845 when the first batches of Asian workers started arriving, till 1917 when this importation of labor was finally stopped, a significant part of the Afro-Caribbean population was still engaged in agriculture.

Table 4.3 Ethnic composition of labor on Trinidadian sugar estates (1877-1879)

Type of Labor	Men	Women	Total
Indentured Indians for 5 Yrs.	16,172	7,221	23,393
Indians on Bounty -1 yr	3,423	771	4,194
'' free Resident Labor	12,450	6,238	18,688
'' Non-resident	10,023	4,882	14,905
Creole Resident Labor	6,703	2,964	9,667
Creole Non-resident Labor	7,623	3,721	11,344

Source: Composed from General Abstracts of Labor in the Annual Immigration Reports. C.O. 384/118, 1878; C.O. 384/124, 1879; C.O. 384/129, 1880.

By the middle of the nineteenth century both Trinidad and Guyana had ethnically diverse populations resulting largely

from immigration. Guyana, observed one contemporary writer had gained:

> a polygot population, consisting of large numbers of Portuguese and natives of Madeira, who have managed to get into their hands the bulk of the retail trade, rivaled in a small way by a fair sprinkling of Chinese; a much larger number of Africans who as schoolmasters, sick nurses, artizans, porters, gold and diamond diggers and balata bleeders fill an important part in the economy of the colony; and a greater number still of natives of India, who with their love of land and fondness for agricultural and pastoral pursuits will probably... have a greater influence on the future of the colony than all the other races put together.[81]

The above description of the working population (the European bureaucratic and planter class has been excluded from this writer's observations) of Guyana at the turn of the nineteenth century shows that social segmentation and economic class differentiation followed closely along lines of race and ethnicity. Similar trends prevailed in Trinidad as well. Commenting on the ethnic diversity of Trinidad by the first decade of the twentieth century, the Handbook of Trinidad and Tobago notes:

> Fully one-third of the population comprise East Indians or descendants of East Indian immigrants who have been specially introduced for estate labour. The remaining two-thirds consist of Europeans of British, French and Spanish descent, Chinese, Portuguese from Madeira, and the West Indian black and colored races. Here indeed "the east meets the west...."[82]

Of these ethnic groups, the three important ones that interacted on the sugar plantations were primarily the Indians,

Afro-Caribbeans, and the Europeans.[83] Racialised stereotyping and comparisons were common in colonial and plantation circles, and in no small measure contributed to the ways in which agricultural work was allocated. These stereotypes also trickled down to the laboring classes whose relationships, in some ways were influenced by the prevailing colonial attitudes. One planter comparing the working abilities based on physical attributes noted in 1845 about the new Indian immigrants:

> As men to compete with the robust natives of Africa in tropical labor; they stand nearly in the same position, with regard to their competitors, as boys of 12 to men in the agricultural operations in Europe. Their physical inferiority is evident to the Negroes themselves. If the Hindu is better able to stand the rays of the sun, he is not stronger as the man of Madeira.[84]

Stereotypical images of both Indian and Afro-Caribbean workers abounded in Trinidad and Guyana in this period. Almost all contemporary observers, writers, officials, and planters invented racial myths about the attributes of the laboring classes. While Afro-Trinidadians and Afro-Guyanese were frequently perceived as "strong, robust but brutish, intractable and undisciplined" workers, the Indians were cast as "mild, weakly, wily and miserly but obedient and easy to control." Indian women workers were further stereotyped as "loose, immoral and streetwise" responsible for social problems on the plantations. Most in the plantation management agreed that both groups of workers had to be controlled and disciplined so as to bring them closer to the abilities of an

average European worker. As Lord Harris, the Governor of Trinidad wrote to Earl Grey in 1848:

> The immigrants must pass through an initiatory process; they are not, neither Africans nor Coolies, fit to be placed in a position which the labourers of civilised countries may at once occupy. They must be treated like children - and wayward ones, too - the former from the utterly savage state in which they arrive; the latter, from their habits and religion.[85]

Such ethnic constructions of identity and the dynamics of gender as it played out in the emergence of particularist race based social formations with lasting impact on the future of plantation economy and creole society, were not natural inclinations of particular groups involved, but an "invented tradition"[86], an artificial construct in which the role of colonial racialised myth making, pervasive ethnic stereotypes, and the workers' own perceptions of the "other", in no small measure contributed to these constructions and relations on the plantations.

Guided by such imagined images and attributes of their workers, the planters and managers systematically allocated work on the estates along these racial lines, astutely playing one group against the other. Ethnic divisions were also deliberately fostered to keep the working class on the plantations divided so as to keep labor unrest and labor solidarity at bay. As Bronkhurst noted:

> the proprietors or managers of sugar estates purposely choose men speaking three or four separate or distinct languages not understood by each other, in order to prevent combination

> in cases of disturbances among them, and thus endanger the lives of the overseers.[87]

In these subtle ways the plantocracy not only created fissures between the races but also within Indian immigrant workers, for they came from different regions of India with different languages and customs. This may have helped the planters in the early period, but by late nineteenth century the Indians had picked up creole English, and most workers spoke Hindi, Bhojpuri or Tamil.

Perceived and imagined differences, aside of contemporary biases of officials and planters, existed amongst both groups of workers as each sought to compete for the limited resources of the agricultural countryside. This rural tension did not break out in any overt racial or ethnic strife, but as increasingly Indian workers started settling down in the two countries, the Afro-Caribbeans and Indians grew to mistrust each other and live separate social lives. Bronkhurst who worked as a missionary amongst the Guyanese working classes, discussed the antipathy and hatred between the Afro-Caribbeans and Indians. According to him African Christians when asked to help Indian missions, quite astutely from their perspective observed:

> 'we can't give, and we won't give anything for such a purpose. We have our own to look after. we never brought these people, and we don't want them. If the missions among such people are to be supported and carried on, let the government and the planters do that, for it is for their special benefit that these coolies are brought here from India.'[88]

Indians too had racialised ideas of the Africans, as most had never interacted or encountered them before in their lives in rural India, and easily fell prey to the dominant and pervasive colonial racial ideologies prevalent in plantation society of the time.

The relations between the different rural classes and ethnic groups on plantations was further complicated by the presence of Indian female workers on the sugar estates. While their presence even in small numbers tended to separate the two major ethnic groups amongst the workers - the Afro-Caribbeans and the Indians even further, it also frequently created tensions between the Indian rural workers and their European superiors. The presence of Indian females bound to sugar estates, meant that the likelihood of social intermixing between the Indians and Afro-Caribbeans got even more remote, as Indians tended to form social and familial bonds with members of their own race and ethnicity, creating particularist and clearly demarcated rural social formations based on ethnic identities. The presence of Indian women created the most significant basis for the workers' ability to form families, set up nascent boundaries of social interactions, extended kinship networks and generally , "recreate their ethnic hearths."[89] As one colonial observer noted in 1879:

> ...Although the female colored classes in the West Indies are considerably in excess of the male and furnish wives in abundance to Chinese immigrants who kindly adopt the American institution of miscegenation, the Hindoo

> labourer will not cohabit with other females than those of his own race, and he feels bitter disappointment at an arrangement which increases the existing disparity of sexes and lessens his immediate chances of securing a wife to share his lot.[90]

The Chinese migrants, in sharp contrast to the Indians, set up families with other ethnic groups primarily because of the absence of Chinese women, though there were other important factors as well which influenced their particular social formation.[91] By early twentieth century there emerged a visible pattern of social, economic, and residential segregation between Afro-Caribbeans and Indians. While Afro-Trinidadians and Afro-Guyanese increasingly removed themselves from agriculture and moved to urban locations, the settler immigrant Indian population started dominating all agricultural activities.

While the scarcity of women created an unhealthy, and sometimes dangerous competition between Indian men for the favors of Indian women, the situation became extremely tenuous when an outsider exploited or solicited favors from Indian women. Purely economic relations of subordination and power between the laborers on the one side and the managers, overseers and drivers on the other, sometimes spilled over to non economic spheres when individual members of the plantation management got sexually involved with Indian women workers. Operating from the subordinated and marginalized ethos of the plantation system, there can be little doubt that most women who entered into sexual relations with overseers or managers

did so from that position of powerlessness. But equally important to stress here is that often women themselves entered into such relationships as they recognised the sometimes real material benefits that could be gained from such relationships. Some women, given their vulnerable status as workers were exploited by the powerful male plantation hierarchy in such inherently unequal relationships, but the possibility of attraction with no conscious or unconscious motivations cannot be ruled out either. Such relationships, arising then from diverse motivations were, not surprisingly, the seeds of much discontentment amongst the male Indian workers. As one contemporary observer of plantation society noted:

> I may state here that concubinage most unfortunately prevails in the Colony....Every overseer or manager of a sugar estate who is unmarried...keeps his mistress or "housekeeper" to look after him...The influence of such an iniquitous system and example, on the part of the European, must necessarily be pernicious on the peasantry. *The coolie or East Indian females, on the different sugar estates and elsewhere, now play the part that the black females did during and down to a recent period, since the abolition of slavery.*[92] (my emphasis)

Such relationships undermined the sharp and delicate balance of power and class relations on the plantations, and had the potential of upsetting the working of the sugar economy if sexual intermixing of Europeans and Indians became too widespread. Labor unrest on plantations often stemmed from such practices. These relationships came to symbolize in the Indian male imagination the marginalization and exploitation

of their status as workers and as men, for not only did the workers feel powerless against the advances of an entrenched and powerful management, but also saw it as a stain on their malehood, for most felt that they could do little to "protect" "their women" against outsiders, whether or not the women involved asked for their "protection" or involvement in their affairs. In the male laboring imagination such relationships transgressed economically, socially, and ethnically determined and invented boundaries of interactions on plantations, threatening not only the smooth working of the cane economy, but also the nascent social, kinship and family ethos that they were building in this early period of their settlement in the two countries. As it was pointed out to the West India Royal Commission in 1898 by indentured worker Bechu, voicing male concerns over "their" women becoming mistresses of plantation overseers:

> It is an open secret that coolie women are in the keeping of overseers. I am in a position to state that a fellow shipmate of mine, a Punjabi, was at one time making overtures to a woman with a view to matrimony, but he was deterred from doing so, as he came to hear that she had got in tow with an overseer, who eventually gave her the money to purchase her freedom....This is another ground for discontent and sometimes leads to riots, yet immigration agents close their eyes to the matter.[93]

While the causes of labor unrest and riots were embedded in the exploitative economic conditions of the plantation sugar economy, often overseers and managers were attacked and labor unrest spread throughout the estates on account of

sexual exploitation or relationships between management and female labor. An editorial in the San Fernando Gazette of 1867 commenting on the frequency of workers' attacks on managers in some estates had this to say:

> How is it that some estates are noted for these disturbances, while others hardly have a labourer in Court from one year's end to another?...the answer and sole answer is that when these affairs do occur, there is something radically wrong taking place on the estate, and that in most cases they are due either to the negligence or injustice of the manager.... few planters will deny, that *if Coolies are fairly treated, their women untampered with and their money is all correct on the pay day, a manager can use any amount of severity...without fear of their rising.*[94] (my emphasis)

The involvement of female workers in sugarcane cultivation affected critical areas of the production and reproduction of the economy of Trinidad and Guyana. The plantocracy encouraged the recruitment and employment of Indian women workers in sugar production, for materially they had much to gain in the short and long run. The presence of steady and diligent female workers not only enabled them to cut costs of labor, and keep wages lowered, but this female presence also provided a strong basis for social, family and kinship networks to emerge, encouraging Indians to settle down permanently in their new homes, and thereby continue to provide cheap labor to the plantations. Particularistic ethnic social formations in the rural countryside can also be traced to the presence of a small but critical pool of Indian females, which made easy miscegenation even more remote

between Indians and other ethnic groups of workers located in the rural laboring classes.

Notes

[1]I have used the term "public" to emphasize that, unlike in the sphere of subsistence cultivation, or peasant cultivation where the workers' labor was not alienated, the mode of cultivation on sugar estates was on the basis of alienated labor and for outside consumption. The means of production, land and labor, were alienated by the Indian workers. By making a public/private demarkation in terms of the economy, I am not refering to the ongoing feminist debate on the applicability of this form of distinction in social and gender analysis, where certain assumptions about the "public" nature of male work, and essentialising women's space and work in the realm of the "private" is being questioned. Feminist scholarship has grappled with and continues to debate the theoretical and political implications of this divide. See for instance Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.); Michelle Z. Rosaldo and L. Lampere eds., Women, Culture and Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

[2]The Still Cry, p. 109. Oral recounting of Bharath, an ex-indentured worker in Trinidad to the author Mahabir.

[3] K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labour, and Look Lai, Indentured Labor. For an earlier work on the economy after the abolition of slavery see Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves; For British West Indian sugar economy see R.W. Beachey, The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the late Nineteenth Century. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957)

[4]See Look Lai, Chap.VIII "Sojourners to Settlers: West Indian East Indians, and East Indian West Indians," in Indentured Labor, pp.217-264.

[5]Ibid., pp. 55-57.

[6]K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labor, pp. 385-386.

[7]Ibid., p.515. See also Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves, pp.133-146.

[8]Ibid., pp.362-382.

[9]Report On the Scheme for Indian Emigration to British Guiana by Dewan Bahadur Kesava Pillai, V.N. Tivary and G.F. Keatinge. 1924 (Henceforth The Pillai, Tivary, Keatinge Report).

[10] Alleyne Leechman ed., The British Guiana Handbook, 1913 (Georgetown: The "Argosy" Co. Ltd., No dt.), p.156.

[11]The Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1921.

[12]See Table No. 18 for proportion of indentured and non indentured Indian workers resident on Trinidad Estates.

[13]See Look Lai, Indentured Labor, Appendix 2: "Evolution of Laws on Immigration in Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica," pp.303-308.

[14]Sanderson Committee Report. Evidence of Mr. Alleyne Ireland, p.359.

[15]See Table No.17 for labor on sugar estates according to type of work contract and a sex comparative of workers.

[16]For an exhaustive study of Chinese indentured immigration to the Caribbean see Look Lai, Chaps. II, IV and VII of Indentured Labor, pp. 19-49; pp. 87-106; pp. 188-216.

[17]H.V.P. Bronkhurst, The Colony Of British Guiana and its Laboring Population (London: T. Woolmer, 1883), p. 137.

[18]Census of British Guiana, 1891 in D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration from India to British Guiana (Henceforth Comins Report for British Guiana), pp.4-7, Appendix 2.

[19]See Table No. 14 for comparative Indian male/female workers in agriculture in British Guiana.

[20]In 1891 for instance, there were only 38 Indian female overseers out of a total of 323 Indian overseers in British Guiana. See Census of British Guiana, 1891.

[21]Census of Trinidad, 1891. See also Table No.15 for a sex comparative of Indian agricultural workers in Trinidad.

[22]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1901.

[23]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1911. See also Table No. 15

[24]There were 11,272 Indian female agricultural laborers out of a total of 11,926 Indian females in agriculture in 1911. Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1911.

[25]There were 26 male Indian overseers in 1911.

[26]For an excellent anthropological and historical study of sugar and its role in modern history, particularly the ways in which the comsumption patterns changed over time and the ways in which the commodity went from being a luxury to a product of mass consumption see Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power - The Place of Sugar in Modern History (New York: Viking Penguin Inc, 1985), pp. 74-150.

[27]Approximately 135 sugar plantations were abandoned in Guyana in the period between 1838 and 1853. Sugar production recovered slowly in Guyana and although there were fewer sugar estates (only 173) estates operating in 1851, than the 214 estates in 1841, they still managed to increase the production of sugar from 32,871 hoshead to 47,890 hogshead in 1851. Guyana became the largest producer of sugar amongst the British

West Indies after 1851 when the sugar economy rapidly expanded. See Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves, pp.161-167.

In Trinidad, however, the production of sugar and the extent of land under sugar cultivation remained stable since emancipation in 1838. One contemporary writer refers to some of the causes for this seeming anomaly thus, "The continuance of cultivation is more remarkable and seemingly paradoxical. It is referrible doubtless to various causes,...to partial and occasional successes encouraging perseverance of better times; to tenacity of property, even under losses... to the change of hands of properties and the purchases from bankrupt owners." See Davy, The West Indies, p.323. See Also, Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp. 10-11.

[28]See Table No.21 for acreage under sugarcane cultivation in Trinidad.

[29]Davy, The West Indies, pp.361-362.

The "Muscovado" process, technically less sophisticated than the "Vacuum pan" process was employed primarily in the smaller estates. In most large estates of Trinidad and Guyana however, the "vacuum pan" was the preferred method of raw sugar production. For a detailed description of the two methods see Algernon E. Aspinall, The British West Indies (Reprint, London, Bath and New York: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1913), pp.171-173.

[30]Sarah E. Morton ed., John Morton of Trinidad: Pioneer Missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies. Journals, Letters and Papers (Henceforth John Morton Memoirs) (Toronto: Westminster Co., 1916), p.35.

[31]The Geoghehan Report, pp.105-106.

[32]C.O. 384/118, 1878. Letter from Robert Mitchell (Agent General of Immigrants) to Colonial Secretary.

[33]Comins Report for Trinidad, p.8

[34]Ibid., (The Diary Section of Comins Report for Trinidad), pp.2-3

[35]Demerara was one of the three counties of Guyana, the other two being Essequibo and Berbice.

[36]George William Des Voeux, Experiences of A Demerara Magistrate, 1865-1870 (Georgetown: The Daily Chronicle Ltd., 1948), p. 125

[37]The West India Royal Commission, Part II, Appendix C, p.679. Statement of Bechu, an indentured Indian worker.

[38]San Fernando Gazette, 23 December, 1892.

[39]Taped oral interviews of ex-indentured women workers Maharani, Poonamma and others. For Maharani's interview see Tape OP-62, No.33, Univ. of West Indies Oral History Project, interview by Patricia

Mohammed. Mrs. Poonamma was interviewed by me in November 1995 in Tunapuna, Trinidad.

[40]John Morton Memoirs, pp.341-342.

[41]The Geoghehan Report, p.113.

[42]Des Voeux, Experiences, p.119.

[43]Ibid., p.119

[44]C.O. 318/261, 1871

[45]K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labor, p.132.

[46]Gt. Britain Parliamentary Papers L, C.8655-57, (1898) Appendix C, Part IV, Report and Papers of the Royal Commission on the West Indian Sugar Industry (The Norman Commission) (henceforth West India Royal Commission)Part IV, Appendix C, p.899. Memorandum of Indian Agricultural workers.

[47]The McNeill-Lal Report, p. 314.

[48]Comins Report for Trindad, p.3.

[49]C.O.384/192, 1895-96, pp.38-41.

[50]Gt. Britain Parliamentary Papers C.1989 (1904), Coolie Immigration - Immigration Ordinances of Trinidad and British Guiana.

[51]McNeill Lal Report, p.20

[52]Census of British Guiana, 1891 in Comins Report for British Guiana,

[53]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1911.

[54]Comins Report for Trinidad, p.46, also pp.13-14.

[55]Some of the important Committees which enquired into the working of indentured immigration from India to the West Indies were J. Geoghehan in 1874, D.W.D. Comins in 1893, Sanderson Committee in 1909-10, McNeill-Lal in 1915 and Pillai, Tivary and Keatinge in 1924.

[56]McNeill Lal Report, p.20

[57]The Pillai, Tivary, Keatinge Report, pp.21-22.

[58]For the prominent Immigration Ordinances for Guyana and Trinidad which laid out the labor laws and rules of indenture in the period between 1845 and 1917 and their evolution see Look Lai, Indentured Labor, Appendix 2, pp.303-313.

[59]An article highlighting the ills that affect Indian immigration in the San Fernando Gazette of Trinidad had this to say of the protection of immigrant workers and the laws that rule their lives:

> It may be said that the Immigration laws provide for the protection of the "immigrants" and that power is given to certain officers of the government to redress all wrongs....But the officers in question do not exercise these powers, and the government does not impose on them the duty of doing so. And it is notorious that planters openly defy the government to interfere between them and their coolies, however badly they may treat them.

San Fernando Gazette, 10 October, 1868. For the enforcement of rules of indenture and protection of workers see Lawrence, A Question of Labor, pp131-196. Also Nath, Indians in Guyana, pp.75-79; pp.120-131.

[60]See Chapter II of this thesis.

[61]C.O. 384/178, 1890. Lord Harris, Governor of Trinidad's letter attached to "Our Population" by H.I. Clark.

[62]Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p. 306

[63]Comins Report for British Guiana, p.37

[64]Sanderson Commission Report, pp.111-112. Testimony of William Morison, overseer, manager and part-proprietor in Guyana between 1875-1906

[65]J.D. Tyson, Report on the Condition of Indians in Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad: Memorandum of Evidence for the Royal Commission to the West Indies presented on behalf of the Government of India (Simla, 1939), pp.78-79.

[66]Sanderson Commission Report, p.24. Testimony of Oliver William Warner, Emigration Agent in Calcutta and Assistant Protector in Trinidad for 12 years.

[67]Ibid., p. 28

[68]Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p.303; Nath, Indians in Guyana, pp. 145-151

[69]For instance in the Immigration Ordinance of 1899 (No.19) of Trinidad, and the Immigration Ordinance, 1891 (No.18) of Guyana, there were provisions for the transfer of indentures of an immigrant worker whose spouse was indentured on another plantation on payment of a commutation fee to the employer by the worker. Similar provisions were made for the transfer of the indenture of children who had been indentured on payment of a fee.

P.P. 1904, (Cd. 1989) Coolie Immigration - Immigration Ordinances of Trinidad and British Guiana.

[70]Sanderson Commission Report, p.28.

[71]Subsistence cultivation and peasant surplus production for the market amongst the Indian immigrants will be discussed in Chapter V.

[72]C.O. 384/109, 1874, Annual Report on Immigration to Trinidad.

[73]The Pillai, Tivary, Keatinge Report, p.25

[74]McNeill Lal Report, pp.20-21

[75]Ethnicity and the construction of identity on ethnic differences has to be studied in the historical context of Caribbean societies, where colonialism and its ideologies have to be taken into consideration. Further, in the particular cases of Trinidad and Guyana, the colonial organization of labor critically informed the formation of an economy and society which developed and sustained a class structure divided along ethnic lines with little or no mobility between them.

Some of the important works that study various historical and contemporary themes in Caribbean ethnicity are: Kevin Yelvington ed., Trinidad Ethnicity (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993); Brackette F. Williams, Stains on My Name, War in My veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Brian L. Moore, Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900 (Montreal and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press; Barbados: University of West Indies Press, 1995); Steven Vertovec, Hindu Trinidad: Religion, Ethnicity and Socio-economic Change (London and New York: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992); Ralph R. Premdas ed., The Enigma of Ethnicity: An Analysis of Race in the Caribbean and the World (St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies, School of Continuing Studies, 1993); Stephen Glazier ed., Caribbean Ethnicity Revisited (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1985).

[76]For a comprehensive study of race relations in creole society in nineteenth century colonial Trinidad see Brereton, Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad; for Guyana see Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation.

[77]This was particularly true for ex-slaves in Guyana where the ability to make land arable was dependent on expensive and large-scale schemes to stop frequent flooding from the highlands and providing embankments against the approaching sea. This was often outside the financial scope of small peasants. See Malcolm Cross, "East Indian-Creole relations in Trinidad and Guiana in the late nineteenth century" in Across the Dark Waters, eds. Dabydeen and Samaroo, pp. 14-38.

[78]According to Walton Look Lai the total no. of Chinese migrants to the British West Indies in the period between 1806 and 1884 was 18,002, of whom the largest numbers of 13,539 went to Guyana and 2,837 to Trinidad. See Look Lai, Indentured Labor Table 23, p.292.

[79]Sidney W. Mintz, "Labor and Ethnicity: The Caribbean Conjuncture" in Crises in the Caribbean Basin, ed. Richard Tardanico,

Political Economy of the World System Annuals No. 9 (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), p.55.

[80]Ibid., p.56

[81]The Handbook of British Guiana, p.212.

[82]J. H. Collens, Handbook of Trinidad and Tobago - For the Use of Settlers (Port-Of-Spain, 1912), pp.13-14.

[83]The Chinese also came as indentured workers to the sugar estates, but unlike the Indians, most of them after the completion of their indentures moved away from agricultural activity into retail trade and shop keeping. See Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp.188-216.

[84]Premium, Eight Years, pp.269-270.

[85]De Verteuil, Trinidad, p.343.

[86]Eric Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

[87]H.V.P.Bronkhurst, Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana (London:T. Woolmer, 1888), p.18.

[88]Ibid., p. 23

[89]"Ethnic hearths" is taken from Sidney Mintz, "Labor and Ethnicity," pp.54-55. He argues that Caribbean ethnic formations were different from the United States, even though both stemmed from immigration. Mintz notes that the Caribbean migrations were "unfamilial" migrations where it was difficult for immigrants to set up culturally familiar "ethnic hearths" due to the absence of "wives or women of the same culture." I argue, that although the proportion of Indian women was small, it nevertheless facilitated the formation of certain familiar structures of family and kinship, along particularist ethnic lines amongst the Indian immigrant workers of Trinidad and Guyana.

[90]C.O. 384/124, 1879.

[91]Chinese migration to the British West Indies was overwhelmingly male, although Look Lai has recorded that a very small number of female migrants also came in the period under study. According to Look Lai, a total of 2,027 female migrants came to Guyana and 309 females to Trinidad from China in the period between 1860 and 1884.

Look Lai, in a detailed discussion of the attitudes of Chinese migrants to social intermixing and interracial marriages argues for reasons other than just paucity of Chinese women for their somewhat less racially exclusive habits of forming social and marital ties than the Indians. According to Look Lai, the largely male Chinese migrations to the West Indies and Latin America replicated the practices of the Chinese diaspora in other classic destinations like Southeast Asia where they often developed a "dual family situation" - having one family in China and the other in the new location. Further, Look Lai also stresses

that interracial marriage habits of the earliest Chinese migrants to the West Indies is exaggerated as most Chinese migrants who came to Trinidad between 1850s and 1860s remained "permanent bachelors". See Look Lai, Indentured Labor pp. 207-211; pp. 293-294.

[92]Bronkhurst, Among the Hindus, p.200.

[93]West India Royal Commission, p.679.

[94]San Fernando Gazette, 13 July, 1867.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN AND WORK - THE PRIVATE[1] DOMAIN OF RURAL WORK AND PEASANT CULTIVATION

> An industrious man can make more than twenty five cents a day, especially if he has a wife and children whom he can get to work on his own land or mind a cow, and naturally his eyes are open to the first chance.[2]

For Indian workers the first chance of creating alternative means of survival independent of sugar plantation production came with the end of their individual indentured labor contracts. Although most laborers continued to offer their labor partially to plantations after the expiration of their indentures, they also became free to pursue other forms of economic activity. In the period under study, the overwhelming majority of Indian laborers remained tied to various forms of agricultural work, ranging from subsistence and surplus peasant cultivation of rice and garden vegetables, to cane farming and tenant cultivation of cash crops like coconut and cocoa.

The Indian family and the larger community survived the rigors of indenture and developed despite being located marginally in the macro-economy of plantation sugar. It was in the realm of subsistence production of garden vegetables, cultivation of rice, renting lands for cane farming, cacao production, tending cattle, selling produce to the local markets, and in the thriftily run household that the labor of women remained vital, and was the most creative and critical agency in the survival of the community itself. The emergence

of subsistence and peasant cultivation of marketable surpluses amongst Indians became important in re configuring both plantation society demographics and the demography of Trinidad and Guyana in general. By the 1870s there was a greater tendency amongst Indians to settle permanently on a plot of land in their new adopted homes than to repatriate back to India.[3] The role of women was critical in setting up a livelihood to sustain this settlement outside the barrack life of the plantation.

The growth of a substantial Afro-Caribbean peasant sector in the British West Indies can be traced to slave emancipation and apprenticeship in 1838. Woodville Marshall discussing the growth of West Indian peasantry identifies three periods of its emergence, namely, the period of establishment from 1838 to about 1850-1860, the period of consolidation lasting till 1900, and the period of saturation which carried over to contemporary times.[4] The major impetus to the development of an Indo-Caribbean peasantry was the expiration of the indentured contracts of immigrant workers. The Indian immigrants emerged as a distinct group in the West Indian peasant sector from the late 1860s when efforts to regularize squatting on land was undertaken by colonial governments of Trinidad and Guyana.

Peasant development and growth in the context of the West Indies is historically a relatively new phenomena. The West Indian peasantry did not constitute a timeless social group identifiable with an old civilization.[5] A substantial

sector of West Indian peasantry emerged in the aftermath of abolition of slavery and in contextual reference to labor reorganization on plantations. For instance, both Afro-Caribbean and Indian peasant groups arose out of the abolition or cessation of systems of labor on plantations like slavery and indentureship.[6] Peasant production therefore grew in contradistinction to the larger plantation economy both in terms of land and labor organization, and in the kinds of crops grown. While individual peasants sometimes did offer their labor seasonally to plantation work, the important point to emphasize in identifying this group was that the bulk of their labor was spent on the cultivation of their plot of land with the help of family labor. It needs to be emphasized that the relationship between the dominant plantation system and the small independent peasantries was not one of binarily fixed opposition nor of any challenge to the dominant economic system of plantations but rather, of an uneasy coexistence.[7]

In this chapter I look at not only the growth of an Indian peasant sector[8] and the critical importance of the family in its development, but also the creative ways in which members of the household, particularly females subsidized the family income with supplementary rural work like petty marketing, mid-wifery etc. While individual statistics of women involved in this sector is hard to get, it is evident from contemporary colonial observers, official reports, and other economic indicators that it was the labor

of the whole family which sustained peasant cultivation. What constituted an Indian family and how members got access to land for cultivation in the period under study therefore are important in understanding the land and labor organization in peasant economic production.[9]

The chapter looks at the impact the presence of women made to the formation of different elements of the Indian household economy, namely, in self-provisioning, subsistence, peasant agricultural production, and in the formation of families. The ways in which time-expired indentured women workers shaped the internal dynamics of power in this group is important in understanding how the community sustained itself and developed over the period under study. This chapter pays particular emphasis to the relations of power within the family and the ways in which the family allocated its work and leisure in domestic rural and peasant work.

Land Settlement Schemes For Ex-indentured Indians

At the onset of the indentureship experiment in 1845, the immigrant worker's right of repatriation back to India after completion of the labor contract was considered integral to the success of this scheme of labor appropriation. The right of a free return passage back to India was considered indispensable, as most workers who migrated from India left without their families, as a temporary arrangement to make money overseas and return to their families.[10] This arrangement also made the task of recruiters easier as they could sell the idea of temporary

displacement far more easily than the notion of permanent settlement in a foreign country. Emigration officials in Calcutta and Madras also felt that workers returning from Trinidad and Guyana after a successful completion of their contract served the purposes of emigration well. As the Emigration Agent in Calcutta noted in 1888:

> A large number of returned immigrants are active agents in furnishing the interests of emigration in this country....Returned emigrants therefore give the best hope of inducing families to emigrate. They form in fact a valuable class of unlicensed recruiters....I heard at least twenty who had re-emigrated with their women folk....It is among those re-emigrating and the people whom they induce to accompany them that families predominate.[11]

Between 1845 and 1890 however, much had changed in both the perception of the officials in-charge of the indentureship system operating between India, Trinidad, and Guyana, and the conditions of labor on the plantations. Increasingly, officials saw the system of free repatriation as a burdensome expense which increased the unit cost of labor for the planters and the government. Repatriation's concomitant value in facilitating greater family migration also lost its importance with time. There was in this period, a growing realization of the long term economic value of inducing Indian immigrant workers to settle permanently in the two countries. Many workers did not avail themselves of their right to repatriation, but instead, preferred to occupy unused lands quite randomly throughout the two colonies. By the late 1860s, recognizing the value of such settlement, colonial

administrators decided to regularize squatting on lands and provide encouragement to ex-indentured workers by legislating some forms of land ownership schemes and land grants. Comins, studying the whole question of free passage and its abolition noted in 1892:

> A consideration of the value of immigrant colonists as labourers, tax-payers, and producers of grain and other food, shows how greatly the colony must suffer by their return to India, taking with them large sums of money, all acquired in the colony, and which represents so much of the interests of its capital, the withdrawal of which is a serious drain on its growing resources.[12]

As free repatriation of workers became less desirable over the years, correspondingly the importance of land settlement and the types of tenures to be given to ex-indentured workers became the primary concern of both the government and planters of Trinidad and Guyana. Land commutation became the earliest scheme of settlement, where a grant of land in return for the right of a passage back to India was introduced amongst the immigrant workers. The colonial government of Trinidad under the governorship of Sir Arthur Gordon in the years between 1866 and 1870 laid down the first concrete regulations for the sale and grants of crown lands. The purpose of such legislation was two-fold. Firstly, the sale of crown lands at a reduced price, or outright grants to the ex-indentured workers was a means to regularize and control illegal squatting on land that had previously been undertaken by free laborers. More importantly, it gave the government some means to control the

dispersion of labor away from the sugar estates after the expiration of the workers' indentures. Grants of crown lands were made deliberately close to sugar plantations so as to give planters access to cheap labor when needed.[13]

Table 5.1 Commutation of return passages in Trinidad (1869-1889):

Year	Men/10 Acres	Men/5 Acres and 5 Pounds	Men/5 Pounds	Men/ 5 Acres	Wives/ 5 Pounds	Child- ren	Total Persons	No. of Grants
1869	12	---	---	---	---	---	---	12
1870	22	---	---	---	100	---	---	22
1871	140	---	---	---	---	---	---	140
1872	162	---	---	---	---	---	---	162
1873	335	18	---	---	96	3,000	5632	353
1874	85	394	---	---	133	---	---	479
1875	84	413	---	---	223	---	---	497
1876	68	247	---	---	110	---	---	315
1877	74	119	---	---	68	157	418	193
1878	96	163	---	---	77	247	603	279
1879	87	86	108	---	74	202	557	281
1880	3	---	172	14	146	302	637	189
1881	---	---	220	1	182	362	765	221
1882	---	---	209	---	191	423	823	209
1883	---	---	216	---	184	401	801	216
1884	---	---	104	---	96	166	366	104
1885	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0
1886	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0
1887	---	---	100	---	100	232	432	100
1888	---	---	100	---	100	259	459	100
1889	---	---	107	---	93	240	440	107
Total	1,168	1,460	1,336	15	1,873	5,591	11,933	3,979

Source: K.O. Lawrence, A Question Of Labour, p. 388

The new land legislation in Trinidad under Governor Gordon met with some success, and laid the foundation for a new rural class of peasant proprietors to emerge amongst the Indian immigrants. Although, in the first year of its introduction in 1869, land under this scheme was purchased primarily by Spanish settlers, over the next decade Indian immigrants increasingly started utilizing Gordon's scheme and exchanging land for return passages back to India. D.W.D.

Comins who visited Trinidad and Guyana to study the indentureship system, noted the success of Gordon's land legislation thus:

> How greatly the system he introduced has prospered is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that at the present day Indian immigrants alone own or occupy 35,844 acres of land besides 2,026 lots and 2,480 houses.[14]

In Guyana, the earliest efforts to encourage permanent settlement of Indians was made in 1871, when the government made the property of "Nooten Zuill", in Demerara available for grants in separate lots to Indians. However, this scheme failed as Indian workers eligible for such grants did not consider the land suitable for cultivation and not a single request for land was received by the government.[15] Despite this early failure, land commutation remained the chief method of settlement in Guyana till the early 1880s. Under the rules and regulations of the land commutation scheme, adult immigrants who relinquished all claims to a return passage to India could have an allotment of two acres of land for cultivation and one-fourth of an acre for a place of residence. Children between the age of one and ten years could receive a grant of half an acre of land. The government also agreed to give a portion of the grounds for grazing which was to be used by the whole settlement. This experiment was tried out by the government in the grants of land on Plantation Huis t' Dieren.[16] Although prospective Indian settlers had little choice in the selection of the land they acquired in return for surrendering their right to a passage back to India, this

form of land grants became in Guyana too, the foundation of an Indian peasant proprietary.

By the early 1880s, the depression in the sugar economy had repercussions in the organization of land and labor not only on the sugar plantations, but also on independent settlements introduced to keep Indian workers in Trinidad and Guyana. Increasingly, even commutation of land was felt to be a burdensome cost at a time when both the government and the plantation economy could ill-afford additional expenses. Simultaneously this period also saw wages being driven to new lows, forcing workers to look for opportunities elsewhere. Buying and renting land became critical to their survival at this time. Henry Turner Irving, the governor of Guyana from 1882 commenting on the uselessness of the land commutation scheme under the changed economic circumstances of the colony and urging the introduction of sale of lands instead observed:

> The system of commutation has the advantage of extinguishing a claim against the colony which would otherwise remain dormant; but it may frequently involve a needless expense in buying up a right which the immigrant has relinquished all intention of exercising, while *I believe that the object in view can be equally attained by enabling the immigrants to buy land for themselves in such localities and in such quantities as may suit their tastes and requirements. Coolie settlement brought about in this way is, in my opinion, likely to be more satisfactory and successful than a settlement effected by free grants of land given in commutation of the right to return passage, in localities selected for the immigrants by government and under government supervision or control.* And although the cooly who buys his land does not surrender his right to return passage, there is little danger of the right being claimed by a man who has established himself with his wife and family

> in a homestead on his own freehold.[17](my emphasis)

In the face of a growing crisis in the West Indian sugar industry, diversification of the monocultural economy of sugar with the cultivation of different agricultural crops was actively encouraged. By the 1880s it was felt that the small peasant cultivator could play an important role in enlarging the economy in this direction. Sale of land in small plots was undertaken by the governments of the two countries in this period. This form of land settlement, where the Indian ex-indentured worker could buy a minimum of five to ten acre plot of land at a place of his choice inevitably clashed with plantation interests, as planters felt that the growth of an independent peasantry amongst Indian workers would increase competition over the labor resources of the two colonies. Yet, in the economic reality of the 1880s, with the staple sugar industry in a slump, the development of an Indian peasantry, was in some ways almost inevitable. As the West India Royal Commission in its recommendations on ways to revive the West Indian economy in the aftermath of the sugar industry crisis noted in 1898:

> The existence of a class of small proprietors among the population is a source of both economic and political strength. The settlement of the labourer on the land has not, as a rule been viewed with favour in the past by persons interested in sugar estates. But it seems to us that no reform affords so good a prospect for permanent welfare in the future of the West Indies, as the settlement of the labouring population on the land as small proprietors, and in some places this is the only means by which population can in

> future be supported....We are (also) convinced that in many places (the large estates) afford the best, and sometimes, the only profitable means of cultivating certain products, and that it is not impossible for the two systems, of large estates and peasant holdings to exist side by side with mutual advantage.[18]

From the mid 1880s, the sugar plantocracy and the Indian peasant household worked out an uneasy and largely mistrustful coexistence. Indian workers could ill-afford to completely remove their labor from the sugar estates, particularly in the early years of preparing their newly acquired lands for cultivation, and therefore remained tied to both forms of production to a greater or lesser extent. While some felt that indiscriminate settlement of land by Indian immigrants would cause rapid destruction of fertile lands by unscientific practices of the new cultivators, most in plantation circles were more concerned with competition over labor. As one despatch from the Governor of Trinidad to the Colonial Secretary noted:

> The most frequent causes of desertion are that the men get tired of the monotony of life on the same estates, and want to change, or they are enticed away by their countrymen, whose time of indenture is up, and who have established cacao plantations or rice farms or market gardens. These latter promise them an easier life and good wages, promises which are never kept....Such however are the ties of caste that these men inspite of their treatment cannot be got to give up the name of their late employers, so as to enable a prosecution to be laid.[19]

Desertion of labor from the estates also occurred during the depression in the sugar industry when wages dipped further,

leaving the worker little choice but to search for alternative work.

In addition to actively opposing grants of lands to Indians far from sugar estates, planters resorted to other methods of keeping the labor from dispersing. Several inducements were given to the time expired indentured workers to remain close to the estates. Often the planters rented out land with a permit to grow rice and vegetables for subsistence or sale, with the condition that the worker offer his/her labor to the sugar estates on some days of the week. Pasturage grounds were sometimes provided for the cattle owned by the workers.[20]

With the passage of time, as free Indian workers started acquiring some form of occupancy rights on land and creating a core group of peasant cultivators, they became more active in voicing their concerns and interests on issues such as land distribution. Often Indian and Afro-Caribbean cultivators would rally together and send memorandums to the government requesting that crown lands be granted to them. One such memorandum in 1884 complained that thousands of workers were being driven out of employment on sugar plantations owing to the deepening economic crisis and that their difficulties could be alleviated if the government would sell them crown lands at one sterling pound per acre payable ten years after allotment. This request was denied as it was felt that such indiscriminate grants would bring further distress to sugar

planters as it would facilitate flight of labor and drive up costs of production further.[21]

Although such demands by an impoverished labor force initially met with little success, the devastating effects of depression in the main industry of the two colonies forced British officialdom to capitulate to these demands in some measure. From the early 1890s the sale of crown lands increased steadily in both Guyana and Trinidad. This unrestricted sale of crown lands was viewed by planters with alarm, and was strongly opposed. Yet the reality of the depressed sugar economy meant that alienation of land would continue since increasing numbers free Indian labor could no longer find adequate employment or wages in the sugar industry. Further, such alienation of land did alleviate the problems of poverty in the rural countryside to a certain degree and helped in greater diversification of the economy. As Indian workers arguing against the claims made by plantation firms to the West India Royal Commission noted:

> What is the nature of the evil complained of by Messrs. Abel and Femwick? Is it the presence of the number of rich and flourishing cacao estates formed with few exceptions, from small holdings originally purchased from the Crown by immigrants and others and planted in cacao, or the steadily increasing body of sturdy, hardworking and thrifty peasant proprietors, chiefly immigrants, who, though severely handicapped from the want of good roads, are by their energy and perseverance gradually substituting a smiling and profitable cultivation for the howling forest, and at the same time contributing to the revenues and producing cheap food for the general population.[22]

Table 5.2 Crown lands purchased or leased by Indians in Guyana (1891-1913):

Year	Grants and Homesteads		Licenses of Occupancy	
	Number	Acres	Number	Acres
1891-92	2	150	4	200
1892-93	3	300	1	35
1893-94	2	350	3	250
1894-95	4	310	7	493.50
1895-96	4	350	1	100
1896-97	4	284.42	---	---
1897-98	10	850	---	---
1898-99	63	5,992.63	1	93
1899-1900	18	1,440	44	501.12
1900-01	72	5,800.71	28	231.72
1901-02	39	2,171.70	3	155
1902-03	80	1,990	---	---
1903-04	95	3,370.50	7	421.41
1904-05	29	494	17	248.42
1905-06	82	1,743.27	17	3,091.08
1906-07	30	598.21	17	900.10
1907-08	59	1,361.42	11	283.43
1908-09	63	1,188	17	2,140.75
1909-10	23	535	4	328.55
1910-11	59	1,152.03	5	1,140.08
1911-12	36	525.44	4	10.93
1912-13	67	960.38	10	333.66

Source: The McNeil Lal Report, p. 148

Table 5.3 Crown lands purchased by Indians in Trinidad (1885-1917):

Year	No. of Grants to Total Population	Acreage	No. of Grants to Indians	Acreage
1885	599	8,171	164	2,150
1886	661	11,123	142	2,051
1887	739	10,800	198	2,736
1888	585	9,115	144	1,811
1889	434	5,391	149	1,816
1890	489	6,165	162	1,865
1891	517	6,925	N.A	1,482
1892	528	5,622	N.A.	1,778
1893	684	7,222	N.A.	2,462
1894	699	7,072	N.A.	2,028
1895	630	6,894	256	2,742
1896	407	4,390	N.A.	1,205

continued next page

Table 5.3 contd.

1897	432	4,690	171	1,869
1898	706	8,002	217	2,699
1899	1,299	14,630	445	4,087
1900	1,422	13,856	492	4,474
1901 (3/31)	331	3,764	112	1,067
1901-02	1,303	11,509	605	4,518
1902-03	1,141	9,882	346	2,797
1903-04	1,233	12,407	532	4,166
1904-05	1,539	16,208	646	4,898
1905-06	1,232	12,780	544	4,103
1906-07	991	8,004	493	3,306
1907-08	1,157	9,494	475	3,186
1908-09	1,369	13,402	651	4,802
1909-10	992	8,123	430	2,977
1910-11	543	3,466	232	1,283
1911-12	342	1,425	101	253
1912-13	274	1,638	80	478
1913-14	411	3,319	134	626
1914-15	405	2,508	120	627
1915-16	281	867	65	159
1916-17	379	1,625	65	141

Source: Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p. 284.

The land commutation scheme was abandoned in 1879 and the sale of crown lands became the chief means of alienating land in both countries from the early 1890s. The types of tenures on land and the nature of occupancy rights that the workers were granted on land varied in the period under study. In the earlier scheme of land commutation in return for a free passage to India which operated till 1879, most grants of land were made to individuals, transferring absolute proprietary rights similar to freeholds to the allottees. In some areas the government organized settlements of Indians in this manner, but this proved to be a failure as crucial elements of successful cultivation like good drainage, irrigation, and roads were absent from these settlements. Grants of such land with freehold occupancy rights defaulted and changed ownership

quite frequently as individual cultivators struggled to maintain the inhospitable land grants.[23] The two other types of tenures on land were the homestead grants which were limited to five acres with restrictions on alienation for a period of ten years. Some grants of ten acre lands were also made to encourage the growth of small cultivators. Most land however after 1890 was leased or licensed out for a term, where the cultivators paid rent on the land.[24]

Occupancy rights granted to women workers after the completion of their indentured contracts on sugar plantations had a chequered history. The first crucial differentiation made by the government in the allotment of land to women workers was to classify their status as married or single. While legally and theoretically speaking, single women were to get land under the same rules of occupancy and tenures as their male compatriots under the land commutation scheme, married women did not enjoy similar rights. Land was not to be given indiscriminately and only the minimum amount needed by a family to cover for the costs of repatriation was to be granted to a household. It was feared that largescale grants of land would lead to withdrawal of large numbers of potential laborers from sugar plantation work. Land under this scheme was granted to the head of the household rather than to individual members of the family. As one report of 1871 observed:

> The immigrant should not have more land than he himself can cultivate with the assistance of his wife and children. The land would require to be drained before he got it, which

> would cost something, and ofcourse, diminish the extent of land he would otherwise be entitled to, as measured by the cost of his passage.[25]

Indian workers however felt that the land commutation scheme that was introduced by the Guyanese government was inadequate as it did not ensure grants of land to women, particularly their spouses. The Demerara Daily Chronicle reported in 1881:

> The government proposal was intended to apply to male coolies, but the latter, we believe, considered this did not go far enough, and they claimed that similar terms should be granted to their wives and children. They likewise asked that in addition to the transport of land, its efficient drainage should be assured to them, by front dams. On these points the government seems disposed to coincide with the demands of the coolies.[26]

In both Trinidad and Guyana, the proposed land commutation scheme which prevailed till 1879 was intended to be negotiated with the male head of the household, while their spouses who were also ex-indentured workers enjoying the right of a free return passage back to India, were paid a cash bounty instead of land for surrendering the privilege. It was only at the turn of the century in 1900 that an important amendment was made to the Ordinance of 1891 in Guyana which laid down rules of ownership of land by women. According to the new amendment women's right of occupancy over any land granted to them would not pass over to the male member in case of marriage of the concerned parties. In 1900 the amendment laid down:

> In every in which any land is granted or transported or money paid to any woman in lieu and satisfaction of her right to return passage free of cost or at a reduced cost, such land or money shall notwithstanding any marriage then existing or thereafter contracted be at all times held, enjoyed and disposed of by her as if she had never been married.[27]

Table 5.4 A selection of wives (husbands received 10 or 5 acres) who received cash bounty in lieu of return passage:

Name	Registration Number	Amount in Pounds
Alladee	10555	5
Austoorun	26573	5
Atowarea	28890	5
Bhohea	10695	5
Batchnee	18960	5
Bamah	22205	5
Bhagmoneah	27253	5
Bishee	28762	5
Bataseah	39188	5
Bunnoo	25548	5
Boodhuee	1064	5
Baumah	10468	5
Boydee	32637	5
Boodhonee	3770	5
Beekun	26260	5
Chetty	12007	5

Source: C.O. 384/102, 1874

The above tables on land grants to ex-indentured workers and cash bounty to female ex-indentureds show that even though legally single women could get a grant of land if they had pursued agricultural work for at least three years, not a single woman is registered to have received a grant of land under the land commutation scheme in Trinidad between 1869 and 1889. In Guyana too, grants of land under the commutation settlement scheme were with male members of the household. Most female workers received a cash bounty in exchange for the

right to return passage. One explanation for this discrepancy between land settlement policy and its actual governance and practice could be that most women, even when they came from India without spouses, soon found a male partner on the plantation and set up a household with him. Given the far fewer numbers of immigrant women, they had little difficulty in finding willing males to set up home and hearth with, particularly after indenture. These early unions may have been unstable and illegal in the eyes of the state, but were considered by the participants of the unions as being part of a legitimate household. The impetus to pool in the resources of the household was recognized as an important tool in the economic survival of members of the immediate family and the larger household. Those immigrants who had a large household could sustain a steadier cultivation of their lands as they could avail of their family's labor. Single workers with grants of land suffered as they had to either hire wage labor to sustain cultivation of market surpluses or remained primarily subsistence growers dependent on their own labor and the goodwill of their friends.

The official position on land grants before 1900 to male and female free Indians was consistent with the type of policies that the plantation management followed on sugar estates, where too, over the decades certain negotiations pertaining to women's labor were made with the head of the family or household. Such deliberations within the plantation economy where power of bargaining shifted to male heads of

households also reverberated into the domestic economy of the immigrants. By differentiating between "married"[28] and single women in the land grant schemes and placing the occupancy rights of land before 1900 in male hands within the "married" household, the government was functioning on prevailing patriarchal assumptions, and indirectly aided in the creation of a new patriarchy in the immigrant Indian community. In the period between 1845 and 1900, control over land was one crucial element which "married" Indian women lost and which facilitated the dynamics of power and household economic decisions to shift to male members. Although from 1900, with the amendment to the Ordinance of 1891, women theoretically or in the eyes of the written law, got back control over any piece of land that was granted to them, in the every day practices of patriarchy, the power of bargaining in the overall economic survival of the Indian immigrant rural community outside the sugar industry shifted primarily to male members. This is also evidenced in the different memorandums and petitions that were forwarded to either the local governments or to the different commissions of inquiries visiting the two countries. Rarely, if ever can one identify a female signatory in these petitions. Most demands of land for women were made on their behalf by their male spouses or co-workers.[29]

After 1890 with increased sale of crown lands, the patterns of land settlement became less discriminatory in terms of gender in the legal sense, for in the sale of lands

there were no statutes of law barring women from buying land. However, by the turn of the century, with greater settlement, and establishment of stronger patriarchal family ties, the location of power within the household shifted primarily into male hands, particularly in such vital cases as purchase of land. This is not to suggest that women did not become peasant proprietors, or make important economic decisions, but they were few and far between. According to the 1911 Census of Trinidad for instance, there were only 578 women peasant proprietors out of a total of 2,881 Indian peasant proprietors.[30] The majority of women workers who had married or who were living with a man, worked on the family plot but had little powers of decision making in their own hands. While Indian peasant women may not have had much control over land or the kinds of crops to be grown on them, they often controlled the multiple other tasks they undertook to supplement their family's income. Very often it was the women's idea to undertake petty trading and shopkeeping. The popularization of Indian food in the two countries, for instance, can be traced to these early women hucksters who would set up their rudimentary carts in semi-urban locales and market places cooking and selling fresh Indian delicacies.[31] Most of these early hucksters lived in rural areas, and in non harvest and planting seasons when their labor was not needed on the land, would take up these varied tasks.

From 1890, when crown lands were opened up for sale, only those workers who had some savings could afford to rent or

lease lands. In the sale and purchase of crown lands after 1890 rural differentiation got further accentuated not only by gender but also by differential accessibility to resources, capital, and savings. In this form of land settlement too, the family was placed at a more advantageous position than single workers as they could pool the resources of all adult members of the household to lease, rent, or buy land for cultivation. Individual members of the community also found other ingenious ways of pooling their paltry resources to be able to help each other and themselves. They developed what has been termed "box money" or the "chitty system". Comins describes the system in some detail:

> This is a system much in vogue amongst the immigrants, and is likely to continue so, as it gives them a chance of obtaining a lump sum of money after paying one or more small weekly contributions to what is called "the box", and may be likened to a "pool". Under this system, several immigrants agree together to pay into the "box", which is kept by one of their number selected for that purpose, a certain small amount weekly, usually from 2 shillings to 4 shillings. The total amount thus deposited is then drawn each week by one of the contributors who has, by lottery, gained this privilege.[32]

It was also somewhat easier for immigrant workers who had resided and worked in the two colonies for a longer period of time to have greater access to resources to own or rent lands. The newly ex-indentured workers were placed less advantageously in comparison to the older immigrants and often continued to offer their labor to the sugar estates and to the older Indian peasant cultivators for seasonal wage earning

work. It was quite common for immigrants with savings and capital to become moneylenders advancing loans to newcomers to buy land at high interest rates. H.V.P. Bronkhurst, a missionary working amongst the Indian workers in Guyana observed:

> Some of the old coolies, long resident on the estate, know too well the art of imposing on the newly arrived ones, inspite of all remonstrances and watching on the part of the overseers and managers of estates. They generally provide themselves with bags of rice, and other things necessary for the sustenance of life, and sell them at famine prices, and also lend money at heavy interest to the new Coolies, and thus make haste to become rich and indeed in a very short time they become possessors of shops, farms,...and no longer desire to remain on the estate to work.[33]

The majority of time-expired indentured workers remained tied to various forms of agricultural activity. Their rural class was determined to a large degree by their ability to acquire land, the means they employed to buy or rent it, and the amount of acres they could consolidate under their cultivation. Differential access to the primary means of production - land, labor, and capital critically informed the rural class configuration amongst this group. Just as married and single women fared differently in access and control over land, similarly there were sometimes vast differences between older workers who had resided and saved in the colonies for a longer period of time and the newly independent immigrant worker. An important basis of rural differentiation also stemmed from differences in the types of tenures and occupancy

rights on land that individual workers and households enjoyed. Thus while some became rich peasant proprietors owning large tracts of lands in freeholds, and sometimes even estates, employing wage labor (usually Indians), there were others who struggled at the bottom, surviving largely on subsistence cultivation. In all likelihood, the largest group was placed in the middle of these two extremes as tenant cultivators producing minor surpluses for the market, paying rents to leased lands as well as offering their labor seasonally to sugar and other estates.[34]

The prosperity of Barathsingh, an ex-indentured worker who became an estate owner in Trinidad in the 1870s is repeated often in official reports and the contemporary press as evidence of the overall well-being of Indian immigrant settlers in their new adopted homes. Barathsingh's entrepreneurial rise started modestly with a small investment in a retail shop in partnership with his two brothers. After a few years Barathsingh branched off on his own, buying several retail shops in rural areas and eventually buying the Corial Estate on which he employed approximately 100 to 120 African and Indian laborers.[35] Prosperity of the kind enjoyed by Barathsingh was rare amongst the early settlers. Most ex-indentured workers became small cultivators and could survive economically only by juggling a variety of odd jobs from selling milk and grass to peasant cultivation and casual wage labor.[36] Most could not afford to hire any outside labor and depended solely on the work of every member of the household.

The majority of the ex-indentured workers were able to get some form of occupancy rights over a piece of land but they often ran into problems before they could successfully cultivate their lands. In many instances, especially in the period of land commutation till 1879, the lands they received were of poor quality, with no facilities for drainage or roads and removed far from localities and marketplaces. In this early period of settlement of Indians when there was little government assessment of land, or any infrastructural support in the form of roads, dams, and drainage canals, many lands were abandoned. The position and quality of land became critical to the survival of the small cultivator. The Trinidad Chronicle of 1877 reported on the fluctuating fortunes of different settlements like Madras, Chandernagore, and Montserrat based on location, quality of soil, and infrastructural support to the land grants. The newspaper noted in 1877:

> ...It will scarcely be believed, outside of the Island, that this (sic., the Madras) settlement was located in such a dismal hollow; that not the slightest effort was ever made to run a single drain to its damp malarious flats; and that it was thrown to the people as it were, and left to them...without the slightest provision for roads...(many) were abandoned....The lot of people placed in Montserrat (contrasted to the Swamp Settlements) is certainly placed in pleasant places, but for a long time they were ill provided with decent roads. Yet they did not abandon their lots because they felt that their interests were being looked after by a sympathetic guardian. When the Madras and Chandernagore lands were given over to the allottees, the government and its officials seemed on the contrary to consider they had done their whole duty by them, and left them

> accordingly...to their own devices and resources...and with no means to reach a market should they succeed in raising marketable commodities.[37]

While swamp settlements like Chandernagore and Madras struggled to survive on bare subsistence, the settlement of Montserrat seemed to have been successful in growing a variety of crops for local consumption. In the same newspaper a writer in a letter to the editor observed about the settlement of Montserrat:

> I counted no less than 138 garden plots, properly worked by the coolies, and a great many Africans also holding large provision grounds...On every one of the garden plots, covering a large area, I noticed Plantains, Tanias, Yams, Cushcush, Sweet Potatoes, Rice, Corn, Ochroes, Peppers of almost every known kind, Pumpkins, Manioc, lots of young fruit trees, the Orange, Mango, Breadfruit and Nut...Let the government erect Mills and encourage the small land-holders, as they ought to be encouraged and the result will be of the greatest advantage.[38]

Just as the utilization of labor and the extent of land in the peasant sector was different from forms of land and labor use in the larger economy of the plantations, so too were the crops that sustained the Indian peasants. Like the African cultivators before them, the Indians too cultivated primarily garden vegetables for subsistence and for the local markets. The main goal of such cultivation was to provide for the basic needs of the entire household. Many amongst this new group of settlers also grew cash crops like cocoa, coconut, sugarcanes, and rice whose primary distribution and marketing was not directly in their hands. Often they rented a parcel of

private land from an estate and got returns commensurate with their crop production from the owner of the estate. The organization of the production process in the cultivation of cash crops particularly in the allocation and use of labor and the nature of contract lease on land went beyond simple subsistence and self-provisioning.

While the cultivation of rice developed in both Trinidad and Guyana in the late nineteenth century through the efforts of Indian immigrants, it was in Guyana that this cultivation became a substantial sector of the economy. Rice was first introduced into Guyana in late eighteenth century from Louisiana and was primarily cultivated in small subsistence amounts by Maroon hideaway settlements of runaway slaves. Although rice was not new to Guyana and continued to be cultivated in small amounts by the Maroons despite all efforts to destroy this cultivation by the government, it was not until its introduction by Indian immigrants in open, independent cultivation that rice production became an important sector in the economy of Guyana. Although it was as early as 1865 that some Indians from the Hill districts of India began to grow rice in the West coast of Demerara province, it was only by the turn of the century that there was any substantial increase in the acreage under rice.[39] The importance of free Indian immigrants in the introduction and eventual expansion of the rice industry was remarked upon by several contemporary observers. Sir Daniel Morris, the

Imperial Commissioner of Agriculture for the West Indies noted in 1910:

> ...In the case of British Guiana the coolies have also been the means of starting a very valuable rice industry. The rice industry in British Guiana at the time is in a very promising condition. The quantity of rice that used to be imported into the colony has been reduced by about one-half within recent years....The coolies brought with them the knowledge of the methods of raising rice from India, and they are exactly suited to that class of cultivation.[40]

The expansion of cultivable acreage under rice saw a dramatic increase in the first decade of the twentieth century. While in 1898 the area under rice was 6,500 acres, this grew rapidly in the following decades and by 1919 the acreage had increased to 61,400 acres. The following table gives the expansion of rice cultivation from 1903 to 1919.

Table 5.5: Acreage under rice cultivation in Guyana

Year	Acres
1903	17,500
1908	29,746
1913	33,888
1914	47,037
1915	50,737
1916	57,022
1917	58,090
1918	60,432
1919	61,400

Source: Leechman, The Handbook of British Guiana, p.132

The expansion of the rice industry was so dramatic in the twentieth century, that soon commentators forecasting the economic prospects of Guyana entertained hopes of the country becoming "the granary of the West Indies."[41] Guyana rapidly changed from a rice importing country in the early part of the

twentieth century to an exporter of rice to neighboring Caribbean countries. As the Handbook of British Guiana noted:

> Rice was first exported from British Guiana in 1902-3 when about 5 tons,...left the colony. In 1908-9 the export was 3,120 tons,...while during 1912 the export was 2,985 tons....The greater part of this rice is being exported to the West India Islands and to French and Dutch Guiana, and the British Guiana 'long grain' rice is now preferred in these markets. The effect that the local production of rice has had on the quantities imported into the colony has been very marked. In 1899 the quantity of rice imported into British Guiana was 11,300 tons, while in 1911 the imports had fallen to 354 tons, and in 1921 no rice was imported.[42]

As the table below shows, a steady amount of rice was exported from Guyana from 1913 onwards.

Table 5.6: Export of rice from Guyana

Year	Amount in Lbs.	Value in Pounds
1913	17,269,504	106,155
1914	15,880,592	106,920
1915	20,289,584	134,967
1916	29,141,056	219,311
1917	32,182,080	296,418
1918	17,960,320	178,061
1919	15,552,320	198,226
1920	18,110,400	235,570
1921	4,540,480	59,132

Source: Leechman, The Handbook of British Guiana, p.277

In the early years of rice expansion undertaken by ex-indentured Indians, little or no encouragement was given to these new cultivators in the form of accessible land, credit advances or technological knowledge. Gradually as the small, primarily family labor based plots started yielding a good variety of rice did government and plantation owners take notice of the efforts of the Indian rice cultivators, and rented out certain abandoned sugar lands to them.

The expansion of the rice industry was also of some concern to the sugar planters of Guyana. Conflict between the cane plantation economy and the peasantry, if there was any direct competition at all, comes across perhaps most clearly in the cultivation of rice more than any other crop. Without capital or technology at their command, Indians who introduced rice cultivation into Guyana did so only by the proper utilization of their family labor. The Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society of Guyana, describing the family's involvement in the cultivation of rice, noted in 1886:

> In a month's time the women and children went through and plucked out all indigenous weeds and grasses, and tying these into small handfuls, placed them in the soft soil, there to rot and form manure for the rice crop....It was astonishing how soon a couple of men could lay an acre under water....Harvest arrived, with the need of additional hands,...and here came the first clash between manager and rice grower, the one wishing to keep his mill supplied, the other wanting to save his rice.[43]

The success of rice cultivation soon created some fissures between the fledgling peasantry and the sugar plantations. With little capital and virtually no technology at their command Indian rice cultivators depended solely on all the labor they could gather, particularly during planting and harvesting of the crop. On such occasions the labor of the extended family and that of neighbors was solicited.

The sugar industry tried to offset these labor problems by demanding increased immigration of indentured workers from India, which had declined in the years of the depression of

the cane industry. They also tried to keep the rice cultivators close to the estates by allowing them to cultivate it on estate lands. Charles Sandbach Parker notes of these efforts:

> Hitherto the main part of the rice crop of the colony has been grown on the sugar estates on lands given or let by them to their resident labouring population to prevent their leaving the estate in order to grow rice on land in other parts of the Colony granted by the government. In addition to this, however, there is a constantly increasing amount of acreage not attached to sugar estates, upon which rice has been cultivated, and which tends to diminish the supply of free labour available on the sugar estates.[44]

As the cultivation of rice started becoming profitable it came into greater conflict with the sugar industry which tried various ways in which to co-opt it as a subsidiary production of its own. As early as 1910 when the newly established rice cultivation was emerging as a viable economic pursuit and the potential profits to be gained from rice was becoming evident, small peasant proprietors of rice started facing stiff and often unfair competition from big capitalist investors. An American Company acquired 5,000 acres in the Abary district of Guyana and started mechanized cultivation of rice which posed a serious threat to the primitive methods of cultivation by ploughs, harrows, and family labor that most small peasants could afford.[45]

The land acreage returns in 1920 showed that in Guyana for instance, "sugar interests held 167,000 acres of the empoldered land of which 71,000 acres were under cane, 15,000

under rice and were held by 17,000 persons (not all resident labor)...."[46] Evidently therefore, apart from outside capital showing interest in rice, the local sugar industry too controlled a significant portion of the land under rice cultivation which was leased to resident and non-resident labor. This threat to small cultivators from both the sugar estate owners and outside capital was attacked in The Daily Chronicle thus:

> The position of the rice farmer appears to be as follows. If the proprietors of estates have not factories of their own, they hold agencies for other owners of factories. To be able to continue the occupancy of the land the tenant is compelled to sell his paddy to the factory owner or the agent. Should the farmers attempt to sell at better prices to buyers other than these, they make themselves liable to the risk of losing the occupancy of the land upon which they have spent no inconsiderable amount to bring into a condition suitable to rice growing....At the present time most of the small growers are milling their own paddy by the primitive, though picturesque, manner that was in vogue years ago, inspite of the number of rice mills that have been erected throughout the colony.[47]

Although the threat to small scale production of rice in the form of large capital investments and sophisticated machinery was imminent from as early as 1910, Indian immigrants who first made this a successful venture through the mere utilization of their family's labor, primitive tools, and hard work, continued to produce the grain in this manner for several decades. Peasant production of rice in small plots using family labor continued to be important throughout the period under study.

Organization of Household Labor

The Indian peasant cultivator depended primarily on the labor of his/her family to cultivate such a wide variety of crops. The work of women in these new immigrant settlements fell both within and outside the household. John Morton, the pioneer Presbyterian missionary who worked amongst Indian immigrants of Trinidad gave a rather idyllic view of a typical Indian village settled by ex-indentured immigrants:

> Most of the homes were little mud-plastered huts with thatched roof of glass or cane leaves...In the mornings there was little stir in the village. Later many homely scenes were enacted at the doorsteps. *Women might be seen washing the family clothing, husking rice by pounding it in a mortar or perhaps grinding corn in true scriptural fashion by turning one flat stone upon another, often singing as they turned. A mother grabs a naked child and pours over it a bucket of water, using her hands for cleansing by way of a sponge....*Such were the homes of the people the missionary had come to serve.(My emphasis)[48]

To the women of the household, the wives, mothers, and daughters fell the tasks of both the outside world of cultivation and the general upkeep of the family. Indian villages grew around clusters of land settled by free immigrants, and the lives of men, women, and children revolved around the clearing and cultivation of these new lands. Women worked hard, helping on the lands as well as keeping their families clothed and fed. They also often became hucksters, traveling to nearby markets and towns to sell their produce. Each member of the household worked at a variety of jobs to sustain a livelihood outside the realm of the sugar

plantation. Francis Evelyn Mohammed Hosein, son of an ex-indentured Indian immigrant in Trinidad testifies to this to the Sanderson Committee which visited the two countries in 1909:

> Yes, the majority remain agriculturists; but they do all sorts of things. For instance, the whole island is dependent upon them practically for milk. The island is also dependent upon them for charcoal for cooking. It is also dependent upon them for provisions; and they usually are the carriers by land.[49]

The life story that Bhagwanti recounts to the Trinidad Guardian on the occasion of the 150th year anniversary of the arrival of the first batch of indentured Indian workers in 1845, is closer to the reality of the life of hard work that most Indian women spent on the plantations, and after indenture, on their own lands than perhaps John Morton's romantic view of an Indian village. Bhagwanti came to Trinidad in 1912 as a small girl in the company of her parents. After her parents' indentureship expired the family moved to work on another estate. Bhagwanti never went to school, since she was responsible for all the domestic chores. At the young age of fifteen she got married, which however, lasted only two years. Bhagwanti, on the urging of her parents remarried and had eighteen children with her husband Patiram. Many however did not survive the rigors of the harsh life they led. Their lives revolved around multiple jobs, from working in the fields of cocoa and coffee at the Lapeyrouse Estate, to planting vegetables and rice on their land in the village of Charuma. Bhagwanti also brought in additional money as a huckster

selling Indian food. She also sometimes did, what she called "granny work" as a midwife, delivering babies in the Rio Claro area. Her own mother Atwaria who came as an indentured worker from India, taught her many skills especially about seeds and planting which she practiced all her life and remembers fondly:

> Mih mai used to always buy tings in de market and plant the seed in we land. Ah does do just like she....all kinda ting ah plant here yes, jamoon, mamee, seepote, soursop, pottigal, sapotee (sapodilla), cocoanut, mango, and chenette....[50]

Although a significant portion of Bhagwanti's adult life was spent in the period after 1917 and does not fall in the purview of this study, her pattern of life was not much different in tone or texture from that of her mother's life before her.

The changes in economic conditions of ex-indentured workers, not in terms of poverty or prosperity, but rather in terms of the economic organization on which they based their lives after indenture, had some effect on family organization, gender hierarchy, and sexual division of labor in the newly established settlements. At one level, the institution of family strengthened amongst immigrants after the completion of their indentured contracts, especially when the family could locate itself on a piece of land independent of the harsh barrack existence of the plantation. Although the colonial state and the plantocracy encouraged family life amongst the immigrant workers from the 1890s by marriage ordinances etc.,

it would be deterministic to suggest that the Indian immigrant family's origin lay in the narrow economic interests of the planters' or the colonial state's desire to expand the labor base. Immigrant workers' own desire to settle down and establish social roots, kinship networks, and a community was important in the eventual emergence of the family as well. The importance of the family as the organizing and fundamental unit of labor use in Indian peasant cultivation cannot be denied, but the emergence of the institution amongst the immigrants was not merely due to changes in economic organization, access to land, or the state's impetus, although these too played a part in the institution's evolution.

What the family meant to members who belonged to it and the way in which it was structured differed quite radically from contemporary nineteenth century British, Victorian ideals of the bourgeois, nuclear family. Marriage often did not form the basis of the family unit, and even when the man and woman were married according to their personal religious rites, it was not recognized by the state as legal. Often therefore, due to lack of legality in the eyes of colonial administration, the offsprings of such unions, or even the spouse lost control over property of their deceased parent or spouse. Official colonial correspondences even as late as 1905 often discuss the great difficulty in getting immigrants to register their marriages according to the laws of the colony, and of the many descendants who were consequently unable to inherit the lands acquired by their family. Governor Jackson of Trinidad

commenting on this problem of property inheritance noted in 1905:

> ...Whenever it comes to my knowledge that land has lapsed to the crown merely through neglect of parents to register a marriage, which was perfectly valid according to their own religion, I have caused a regrant to be issued to the children.[51]

Such arbitration by the governor could not take care of the majority of inheritors. Despite these hardships faced by the new community of settlers, by the turn of the century the institution of the family grew. In many instances, the household of an Indian immigrant came to resemble the extended joint families prevalent in parts of nineteenth century India. Even in the absence of a typical joint family where at least two generations or more resided under the same roof, often the household of an Indian could be larger than the nuclear family unit of parents and small dependent children. Sometimes, even when two generations of the family did not reside together, they lived in close proximity to each other, and siblings, parents, and other extended kin pooled their labor, particularly in seasons of high labor demand. The strengthening of the family unit, particularly in the later decades of the indentureship period (1880-1917) meant that the family and the larger household pooled both labor and income for the cultivation of subsistence and crops for the local market, the fruits of which were enjoyed by all members of the household, and established reciprocal ties akin to kinship networks with a community of similar class of cultivators.

Francis Evelyn Mohammed Hosein in his testimony to the Sanderson Committee discussed how most ex-indentured workers worked in sugar and cocoa estates for a while to earn and save some money which was then invested in buying or leasing a plot of land. He also talked of how often, family members and extended kin combined their resources and used every member's labor. Hosein's own father for instance, took charge of his brother-in-law's cocoa estate and worked on it for several years. On the use of the family in the cultivation of crops he observed:

> I would just explain one thing to you. I may consider myself an anomaly, as compared with the ordinary East Indian. It is the usual custom for East Indians to get their children to work for them, and to work together with them. In that way, of course, if they have a large family they are able to accumulate a good deal of money. My father did just the opposite.[52]

At another level, the strengthening of family organization had ideological implications which affected gender hierarchy and relations of power between men and women within the family. While in the early period from 1845 to the 1870s, when the system of indentureship was new, seen by all parties concerned - planters, colonial state and most importantly, by many immigrant workers themselves, as a temporary arrangement, and when there was little infrastructural support in terms of land grants or cash bounty to help the workers establish themselves in their new homes, social ties were also often impermanent as many workers hoped and did return to their families back in India. By the 1880s

however, the idea of permanent settlement in the two colonies became more attractive, and the immigrant workers - both men and women, sought to set up social and economic roots in their new homes. Social processes and ideological shifts do not happen overnight. Gradually, as the idea of settlement became material reality for most immigrants and the institutions of family and community strengthened, so too did traditional values of patriarchy start emerging. Although not formalized to any great extent in this early period of settlement in terms of proscriptive laws regarding women, values of patriarchy like early marriage for girls, education for boys and domestic, house work training for girls had already started taking shape. The position of women as wives and mothers who were to be responsible for the upkeep of the whole family became important, and in a sexual division of labor in the household, the powers of decision making in the economic survival of the family went increasingly into male hands. Negotiations with the outside world increasingly got allocated to male members.

However, the Indian peasant household could not afford to keep its womenfolk within the four walls of the house, and their labor was actively employed in the cultivation of crops. In the planting, harvesting, processing, and selling of produce, men and women worked side by side. The woman's day of work did not end on the field. She had the added responsibility of all domestic duties within the house as well. Bronkhurst, a missionary who worked amongst the Indian

immigrant workers in Guyana made similar observations about the responsibilities of women both within and outside their households. He wrote in 188:

> The coolies principally live on rice and curry, a wholesome food which is generally prepared by the *woman of the house,* during the absence of the husband. When both the husband and wife go to work in the field together, on their return the wife prepares the repast, while the husband goes to sleep or visits his *matties*. Should there be a daughter in the family, during the absence of parents, her duty is to fetch water, wood, and prepare food, which is done to their liking.[53]

Duties and responsibilities in the peasant household were clearly chalked out where children were given the lighter tasks. In the allocation of work to children as well, persistent patriarchal values came to play over time. More often than not, the older girl children were given the responsibility of taking care of assorted tasks inside the house in the absence of the mother who accompanied her husband to the field. Most Indian families were large with many infants needing care, which was undertaken by older female siblings. Several respondents in interviews attested to the fact that they or their mothers and grandmothers had several children, and the daughters were left to do household chores. Gangia came with her parents to Trinidad in 1906 when she was only three years old. She remembers, "mih mudder and fadder ain't let me go all about to play, ah had to stay home and mind mih little sister Jumnee."[54]

Statistical information on village settlements amongst Indian immigrants is scanty and unreliable at best. An

analysis of the data below will show how numbers can distort the economic reality of the period.

Table 5.7 Selected occupations (rural) of ex-indentured Indians exclusive of sugar estate work in Trinidad (1891-1921):

Occupation	1891		1911		1921	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Market Gardeners	112	80	8	3	N.A.	N.A.
Planters (Cocoa)	3	---	2	---	N.A.	N.A.
Proprietors (Cocoa)	6	2	99	15	1,008*	386*
Peasant Proprietors	622	98	2,303	578	3,214	1,040
Grass Sellers	97	13	3	---	N.A.	N.A.
Shopkeepers/ Hucksters	169	151	499	315	582	493
Milk sellers	28	40	21	13	N.A.	N.A.
Landed Proprietors	N.A.	N.A.	22	8	N.A.	N.A.
Household Duties	---	1,081	---	3,099	---	9,241
Domestic Servants (Paid)	N.A.	N.A.	147	309	1,532	237
Midwives	N.A.	N.A.	---	21	N.A.	N.A.

Source: Censuses of Trinidad, 1891, 1911, and 1921.

If the above data is taken at its face value, it shows that the number of immigrants engaged in peasant cultivation was quite small compared to the total population of Indians resident in Trinidad. According to census data, out of a total of 67,064 Indo-Trinidadian males, only 3,214 were peasant proprietors in 1921. Similarly, in 1921, out of a total of 54,343 Indo-Trinidadian women, only 1,040 were peasant proprietors.[55] Comparatively, from such data, one gathers that there were infact many more women involved in "household duties" than in actual cultivation of land. However, this

census information cannot be read in this simplistic manner. The problems of census gathering and tabulation were numerous. The sugar plantation structure so dominated the economy and society of Trinidad and Guyana in the period under study that most economic indices like numbers of agricultural laborers etc were predominantly related to the sugar industry, and very little information can be derived from such general categories about the nature and type of labor involved in peasant cultivation.

The census of Trinidad and Tobago for 1921 returned 30,235 male and 19,145 female agricultural workers.[56] Although most of these laborers were engaged in the production of sugar, given the importance of the industry, a further analysis of how many were only offering part of their labor to sugar and engaging in other rural occupations for their daily existence is at best conjectural from the limited data. It is in these loopholes and cracks that labor statistics, particularly household labor data for peasant and subsistence production falls and is difficult to retrieve. This is particularly true for women and children's labor engaged in independent cultivation.

Whenever there is some data available for approximate numbers engaged in peasant activity, they have to be viewed with caution as inaccuracies of census gathering abounded in these times. As the census of 1901 for Trinidad and Tobago noted about the difficulties faced while tabulating occupations, particularly in rural areas:

> When completed it is a general rule the least satisfactory....One of these is the very imperfect and unsatisfactory manner in which the schedule is filled in generally....Another defect...is the absence of all instructions as to those who have dual occupations....A "boilerman", "fireman",...on a sugar estate, return themselves as such notwithstanding that they may be at the same time cane farmers or peasant proprietors, the consequence being that they are classed as "Industrial" and not as "Agricultural."[57]

Information on gender is even more problematic. In Trinidad, for example, census gatherers had stereotyped gender categories around which data, especially regarding occupation, was collected. Such biases automatically precluded women from certain jobs considered "masculine" and vice versa. It was only with the census of 1911 that suitable changes were affected with regard to this, and both females and males were to be included in jobs hitherto considered exclusively male or female.[58] Given these serious flaws in the collection of information in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is not surprising that very little is known of the extent to which peasant cultivation became the economic backbone for the emergence and eventual settlement of the new immigrants, and the quality and quantity of work put in by female members of independent Indian households.

The two distinct occupational categories tabulated in the Trinidadian censuses of 1911 and 1921 on domestic work throws some interesting light on not only the prevailing gender stereotypes, but actual status of women and men as seen from the census collector's pen and the eyes of the respondents

themselves. The table on rural occupations shows that while there was some male presence in paid domestic work, not a single male returned "household duties" as their primary occupation. In the period between 1891 and 1921, the number of Indian women reporting "household duty" as their main occupation kept increasing. While paid domestic work could be located in urban or rural based bourgeois or plantation households, the location of "household duties" as a category of work was primarily in rural areas, as the bulk of the immigrant Indian settlers remained rural between 1845 and 1917. While the percentage of the total female population (all ethnic groups) engaged in agricultural work remained stable at slightly over 9 percent between the period of the censuses of 1901 and 1911, the proportion of females engaged in "domestic duties" increased. The census officials made this observation about the increase:

> The increase under "domestic duties" is very great, and is not easily explained. It may be indicative of prosperity or adversity, as it may be caused either by affluence or poverty; for it may mean either that an increasing numbers of wives and daughters are able to remain at home and look after the house affairs instead of going out to work or that a large number of females of the working class have to remain at home and attend to the household duties - remunerative employment being scarce.[59]

Another equally important possibility was that often the woman in a peasant household was tabulated under "household duties", as only the male member gave his occupation as a peasant proprietor, a tenant cultivator, or a subsistence producer,

even though all members, particularly women were actively employed in every aspect of the agricultural cycle.

John and Sara Morton who did extensive missionary work amongst the sugar estate workers and the newly emerging free Indian settlements described in detail the grueling regimen of work on the new lands acquired by Indian families. Describing the season of cultivation and harvesting of the rice crop, Sara Morton noted the involvement of all members of the household:

> The seed is planted in empoldered nurseries and transplanted to the field when the heavy rains set in. *Then not an hour is lost, not a hand or foot idle (for the foot is a useful instrument in planting rice) till the nurseries are empty and the fields full. It will be the same at harvest....*Transplanting and reaping are the most urgent seasons, but much time is taken up preparing the land and dealing with the harvest after it is cut, so that the rice fields draw away a large amount of labor from the staple productions. *It is profitable to families who do their own work* and the rice is of better quality than that imported from India, but the land is low, the work trying, and the result is often malaria and anaemia.[60] (My emphasis)

For the newly established peasant cultivator with limited or no resources to invest in technological improvements, control seed quality, or improve the fertility of soil, the only recourse was her/his ability to exploit her/his own and the family's labor to their fullest capabilities. Only when the land and the produce from it could regurgitate some profit from the initial investment of hard labor, could s/he afford other improvements in cultivation. Labor, being the most vital element in the success of initial settlement of land and its

proper cultivation, was not wasted and every member of the household was allocated clearly defined responsibilities. It was only after a comfortable level of prosperity had been reached that a peasant proprietor could hire outside wage labor. It was in these conditions that often the outside field work of women and children of the household was withdrawn. Such cases of prosperity in the early decades of Indian settlement in Trinidad and Guyana were few and far between. As late as 1915, just a few years before the abolition of the indentureship system, McNeil and Lal who reported on conditions of Indians in Trinidad and Guyana noted:

> Several others have upward of 100 acres, with annual incomes of 500 pounds to 1,250 pounds from land, house property and trade. We met one with an income of about 1,000 pounds from land, and the sons of another whose income exceeded that sum. *The majority are holders from 5 to 10 acres cultivated partly by household labour and partly by paid labourers, most of the latter being Indians.*[61] (My emphasis)

Some of the oral recountings of ex-indentured women workers collected in Trinidad on the occasion of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the first Indians in 1845, repeatedly bear testimony to their harsh rural existence, where productivity of the land and general survival was dependent on the hard work of every member of the community at large. Rasoolan Mohammed was born in 1898 on a voyage back to India where her extended family of parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters were returning after completing their contracts of work overseas. However, within

three months of their stay in their old village, they were driven back to the emigration depots in Calcutta due to widespread poverty in the region. They went to Guyana as indentured workers, and after the completion of their terms in 1904, Rasoolan's extended family moved to Trinidad where her father bought some land and set up a dairy farm at El Socorro. Rasoolan Mohammed remembers her childhood days when she and her brothers would trek to the Caroni swamp to cut grass for the animals which would then be carted back on donkeys. Childhood itself was very short in those days. Rasoolan got married to Nabee Mohammed at the young age of ten, after which she moved to her husband's village, Camuto. Here they both worked on cocoa and coffee estates. Her work consisted of picking cocoa, coffee and citrus. Rasoolan Mohammed and her family remained tenant cultivators most of their lives, renting land from different estates. They settled finally on rented land from the Orange Grove Estate where they cultivated sugarcane. Rasoolan Mohammed started work at a very early age and continued to put in her labor for the survival and upkeep of her family all her adult life.[62] Rasoolan Mohammed's life story is just one recorded case amongst the many hundreds of immigrants who set up their lands and families in their new adopted homes in similar manner.

In the process of becoming permanent settlers in Trinidad and Guyana, the Indian ex-indentured workers set up the material basis of their lives primarily in rural and peasant agricultural work, where the critical agency of survival was

the optimal use of family labor. Women's work in the production and reproduction of this domestic sector was integral to the successful settlement and cultivation of the land, even though women's powers in some crucial economic decisions of the household like bargaining with the state over land purchases, or allocation of family labor shifted to male members. Women's role in subsidizing the often tenuous, marginal subsistence or surplus material base of small cultivation and unsteady wage work helped in augmenting income, and even may have led to a degree of surplus accumulation. Most contemporary observers never failed to emphasize the thrifty nature of the new immigrants, and the savings that have been tabulated (in a bid to advance the "prosperity" of workers under indentureship) could happen not by the magic of migration and indentureship, but through tremendous sacrifices, struggles, and cooperative working patterns of both men and women in the early years of settlement.

Notes

[1] The term private in the context of women's work is used only to differentiate between the nature of their labor engagements on sugar plantations where they were either indentured or free wage earners, and as peasant and/or subsistence producers where they employed their own and their family's labor for economic survival. In one they had no control over land and labor, while in the other they had some form (either freehold or rentier) control over their piece of land and family labor.

[2] The West India Royal Commission. Evidence of Presbyterian missionary John Morton.

[3] See Look Lai, "Sojourners to Settlers: West Indian East Indians, and East Indian West Indians" in Indentured Labor, pp.217-253 for a discussion of the emergence of free Indian communities after the expiration of indentureship. Also, K.O. Lawrence, "Indians as Permanent Settlers" in A Question of Labor, pp.384-431.

[4] Woodville Marshall, "Notes on Peasant Development in the West Indies since 1838" Social and Economic Studies 17 (1968): 1-14.

[5] Social scietists have grappled with conceptualising peasantry as a sociological and historical category and there has evolved a vast epistemology on questions as diverse as origin and nature of peasant societies, theoretical construction of the category "peasant", peasantry as a cultural and social construct, and peasantry as an economy, its relationship to capital and its accumulation, peasantry as a class, and the politics of peasant mibilization for change and revolution as witnessed by the Maoist Revolution in China. Teodor Shanin isolates the four major conceptual traditions which have influenced the understanding of this group in society, "the Marxist class theory, the 'specific economy' typology, the ethnographic cultural tradition, and the Durkheimian tradition as developed by Kroeber and allied in its theory of social change to functionalist sociology." See Teodor Shanin ed., Peasants and Peasant Societies (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p.13.

[6] Sidney Mintz, "The Origins of Reconstituted Peasantries" in Caribbean Transformations. In the section on Caribbean Peasantries, he argues that the origins of Caribbean peasantries were diverse, where "some came into being only recently; others flourished - and withered - at an earlier time." Mintz traces four distinct categories of peasantries that emerged in the "interstices" of plantations, and as a "mode of response" and "mode of resistance" to slavery and the plantation system. These were "the squatters", "the early Yeomen", "the Proto-Peasantry" and the "Runaway Peasantries". These early groups of peasant formations remained isolated and marginal to the economy of the region. Mintz also suggests that any substantial growth of a peasant sector took place only after Emancipation.

Both the African and Indian groups then can be seen as "*reconstituted* peasantries, having begun other than as peasants - in slavery, as deserters or runaways, as plantation laborers, or whatever - and becoming peasants in some kind of resistant response to an externally imposed regimen." Mintz, Caribbean Transformations, p.132.

One important qualification needs to be made here regarding Indian economic activity after the expiration of their terms of indentures. They undertook not only "peasant" activities, but also additionally, supplementarily, or even solely did other rural work as well.

[7]Peter Fraser has argued for the need to desist from reducing the Caribbean rural formations to a struggle between peasantry and plantation sytems. He further stresses that the term "peasantry" is too often used loosely in the context of the Caribbean as a blanket description for every kind of rural worker not directly tied to the plantations. In Fraser's conceptualisation, the Caribbean in the nineteenth century did not have peasantries, except Haiti. See, "The Fictive Peasantry: Caribbean Rural Groups in the Nineteenth Century" in Contemporary Caribbean ed. Susan Craig, pp. 319-347.

[8]While recognising the importance of Fraser's argument against any hasty judgement of an evolution of the peasantry as a resistant system emerging against plantations, my adoption of the term "peasantry" is taken to highlight only the difference vis-a-vis plantations in organization of land and labor on independent Indian homesteads as being more closely "peasant", in that they were small parcels cultivated by non wage, family labor for subsistence and small surplus cultivation. This is particularly evident in the cultivation of rice in Guyana in the late nineteenth century. The term "peasantry" then, is employed as a descriptive term for a *sector* within the larger plantation economy, rather than a separate, distinct economy itself, with any politico-economic implications of the growth of this sector particularly for the period of this study. This sector remained dependent on the larger whims of the capitalist plantations, and also politically marginalised. To bring out the nuances of female participation in this sector and outside it, I have also discussed their role as subsidisers of the family income by other forms of rural activity like selling milk, cutting grass, rural midwifery, and small scale huckstering and market activity. These do not fall under "peasant" activity, but often the women belonged to a peasant household which undertook these various tasks to supplement family incomes.

For a good discussion of the emergence of an Indian peasant sector in Trinidad see Gerad I.M. Tikasingh, "The Establishment of the Indians in Trinidad, 1870-1900," (Ph.D. diss., University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 1973) Also, Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp. 217-251. K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labor, pp. 384-431. Ramesar, Survivors of Another Crossing pp.77-118. All the above works discuss, at various levels of complexity, not only the emergence of peasant cultivation and other agricultural pursuits of the free immigrants, but also non-agricultural activity, and the political, cultural and social ramifications of their permanent settlement in Trinidad and Guyana. For only Guyana see Nath, Indians in Guyana, pp.93-119.

Although all the works cited above have detailed discussion of different land settlement schemes which helped settle the Indians in their new homes, and also the problems, means, and methods of cultivation employed by the new settlers, none discuss gender and the organization of labor use in this growing rural sector of the economy. There is no discussion of the role of family labor and the ways in which women of the household participated in this sector.

[9]For a review of the sociological literature on the Caribbean family, questions raised, the limitations of some early conceptualizations, and the need for further research particularly relating to gender and family see Patricia Mohammed, "The Caribbean Family Revisited" in Gender in Caribbean Development, eds. Mohammed and Shepherd, pp. 172-184.

[10]D.W.D. Comins, Note on the Abolition of Return Passage of Indian Immigrants from Trinidad and British Guiana (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1892), p.5

[11]C.O. 384/171, 1888.

[12]D.W.D. Comins, op.cit., p.9

[13]Comins, Note on Emigration to Trinidad, p.2.

[14]Ibid., p.2

[15]Comins, Note on Emigration to British Guiana, p.69.

[16]Ibid., p.70-71

[17]Ibid., p.72

[18]The West India Royal Commission, p.180

[19] C.O. 295/433 Vol. II, 1905. See also C.O. 318/262, 1871. Report from the Emigration board discusses the objections raised against ten acre grants to immigrants.

[20]Comins, Abolition of Return Passage, p. 4-5. Also Sanderson Commttiee Report, Evidence of Mr. Robert Duff, Immigration Agent General in British Guiana since 1905, p.321. Also evidence of Mr. Frank Fowler, Government Surveyor and Commissioner of Lands and Mines in British Guiana, p.375.

[21]C.O. 295/302, 1884

[22]The West India Royal Commission, op.cit., p.899

[23]Trinidad Chronicle, 22 December, 1877. On 5 September, 1877 Trinidad Chronicle reported on all the defaulting properties, "The following properties are gazetted for sale on 4th. December, in default for unpaid ward-rate: 38 in the ward of Lower Caroni, all belonging to Coolie allottees of the ill-chosen and neglected Madras settlement, 23 of these are ten acres each; the remainder being five acre lots. In Chaguanas there are 13 in default....In Caraipichaima there are 18 defaulting properties...."

[24]The McNeill Lal Report, p.148. For Guyana also see The Tivary, Keating, Pillai Report, p.4.

[25]British Parliamentary Papers, 1871. Vol.XX (C.393). Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana.

[26]Demerara Daily Chronicle, 10 November, 1881.

[27]Coolie Immigration Ordinances. Cd. 1989. Ordinance 1891, Amendment Ordinance, 1900 (No.27 of 1900)

[28]While many immigrants got married according to their personal religious rites, there were substantial numbers who lived together and considered themselves "married" for all practical purposes. Even those who got married by their own customary practices were not legally recognised unless they registered their marriages with the state. Hence the question of marriage was contentious, subject to varied interpretations, and in the legalistic sense did not conform to prevailing laws and norms.

[29]See for instance the Petition for Land in C.O. 295/302, Vol.3,. 1894. Also see Memorandum by Indians through the Protector of Immigrants to The West India Royal Commission, p. 899.

[30]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1911.

[31]See the interview of Bhagwanti in Trinidad Guardian, May 28, 1995. Indian Arrival Supplement, p.31.

[32] Comins, Note on the Emigration to British Guiana, p.100

[33]Bronkhurst, Among the Hindus, p.208

[34]McNeil Lal Report, p.41-42

[35]Barathsingh's rise to prosperity is discussed in C.O. 384/102, 1874. Vol.1. Also reported in Trinidad Chronicle, 16 January, 1877.

[36]Some of the jobs listed in both the McNeil Lal Report and Comin's Reports on Trinidad and British Guiana include among others - pawnbrokers, provision stores, liquor shps, hucksters, butcher's shops, sellers of milk and vegetables etc.

[37]Trinidad Chronicle, 22 December, 1877

[38]Ibid., 1 May, 1877

[39]Aspinall, The British West Indies, pp.202-203. Also Leechman ed. The Handbook of British Guiana, pp.130-131

[40]The Daily Chronicle, 5 October, 1910. Evidence of Daniel Morris to the Imperial Emigration Committee.

[41]The Daily Chronicle, 12 November, 1910. Article on Rice quoting from The Times (the South American Supplement)

[42]The Handbook of British Guiana, p.132

[43]Sanderson Committee Report, p.245. Evidence of Mr. Charles Sandbach Parker, Chairman of the Demerara Company.

[44]Ibid., p.245

[45]The Handbook of British Guiana, pp.166-168

[46]J.D. Tyson, Report on the Condition of Indians in Jamaica, Britsh Guiana and Trinidad: Memorandum of Evidence for the Royal Commission to the West Indies presented on behalf of the Government of India (Simla: Government of India Press, 1939) p.19

[47]The Daily Chronicle, 1 January, 1910.

[48]SJohn Morton Memoirs, pp.49-50

[49]Sanderson Committee Report, p.313. Evidence of Francis Evelyn Mohammed Hosein.

[50]Trinidad Guardian, Indian Arrival Supplement, 28 May, 1995. p.31

[51]C.O. 295/433 Vol.2, 1905

[52]Sanderson Committee Report, p.313. Evidence of Francis Evelyn Mohammed Hosein.

[53]Bronkhurst, The Colony of British Guiana, p.256.

[54]Trinidad Guardian, Indian Arrival Supplement, 28 May, 1995, p.43

[55]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1921.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1901, p.22

[58]Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1911, p.16

[59]Ibid., p.19

[60]John Morton Memoirs, p.320

[61]McNeil Lal Report, op.cit., pp.41-42

[62]Trinidad Guardian, Indian Arrival Supplement, 28 May, 1995, p.48

CHAPTER VI

CONTESTED SEXUALITIES AND THE FORMATION OF A NEW PATRIARCHY

> ... when the last (immigrant) ship came in I took a papa. I will keep him so long as he treats me well. If he does not treat me well, I shall send him off at once; that's the right way is it not?[1]

It was these stances and expressions of choice exercised by women that Indian men found threatening and sometimes, acted violently against them - even often times murdering them with their cutlass. This chapter focuses on the gender dynamics of social and sexual relations between men and women and how this was played out in relations of power. The absence of traditional social structures and strictures that the new immigrants had left behind in India and the attempts to establish new ones - this in-betweeness gave a certain kind of space to Indian women. This space was neither unmarked nor uncontested by their fellow male laborers or the colonial state (this is not to argue that there was any sense of articulated collusion of interest between the colonial state and the "native" male subject). Three interrelated questions are key in understanding the social ethos that emerged in the nascent immigrant Indian community. First, what was the nature of the social and sexual space that women enjoyed? Second, at what price could they maintain it? Third, how was this space sought to be restricted and made more 'governable' by the colonial state?

The period of early immigration of Indians to plantations was a time of dramatic changes in their social

sphere. Social and sexual behavior was neither permanent nor inscribed in any rigid principles of ritual practice, customs or the law. A variety of relationships flourished between men and women, and women often times exercised their sexuality outside the domesticity of marriage. The relatively advantageous position that women enjoyed in the exercise and control of their domestic space and sexuality was neither ideal, absolute, nor unmitigated by violence. The expressions of choice over sexual and social relations did not become a representative or definitive feature of Indian women's lives. Contested sexualities in the Indian working population, and the forms in which a new patriarchy was slowly worked into the immigrant social fabric were areas of concern both within and outside the community. The colonial state's role and Christian missionary influences in these contested arenas of relations between women and men was not unimportant in the period under study either.

Notions of power, honor, propriety, and morality came to play in the emerging social relations between the two sexes and provided sites of both contestation and consensus between Indian women and men. In narrating the stories of what women's lives may have been like, and in (re)presenting their social and sexual relations, the emphasis on how things changed necessarily involves an examination of power -- who has it and how it is exercised. Power, especially in relation to the different expressions of sexuality, has often been seen as rejection, prohibition, or control over sex.

Historically however, sexuality is not only or always governed by the state's legal and political apparatus.[2] Indian women and men struggled between themselves and with the larger colonial and plantation apparatus, for greater exercise and control over their sexuality and social space. The sexual expressions of women and the social space they encountered and changed were governed by ambiguities and overlap of power relations. They were neither in absolute or total control of their social and sexual space nor were they governed completely by men's desires and machinations. Men too could exercise power through violence as a means to control sexual and social relations. The protean nature of power between women and men also reflected the shifting and rather uncertain axis of "freedom-unfreedom" experienced by women on plantations. While these responses and negotiations were largely local and outside the colonial and plantation legal framework, the politics of gender relations amongst Indian immigrants were shaped by their location in plantation society as indentured and wage workers. However, these struggles between laboring women and men did not go uncontested by the colonial state or the plantocracy which tried to regulate the social and sexual responses in various ways.

Social Relations and Expressions of Sexuality

In the early decades of indentureship most men and women came without families. The relationships that emerged between these indentured men and women were often complex and not

always binding. Partly because of the segregated nature of their work on sugar plantations, their isolation from other races, and their inability to move away from their estates, that most Indians established social and sexual relationships within their own community. Additionally, the conditions under which they entered plantation society as replacements for free Black labor also, in no small measure created animosity and distrust between the two groups of workers - the free Africans and the indentured Indians. Contemporary colonial observers and missionaries working amongst Indians have noted their reticence in forming relationships outside the community. The Secretary of State in an official despatch to the Governor of Trinidad noted in 1888:

> They preserve the habits and customs of Hindoostan, do not intermarry with the negro races and do not send their children to mixed schools.[3]

The dynamics of racial animosity stemming from the particular condition of labor arrangements on sugar plantations as well as the relative physical and socio-cultural isolation from other races on the estates made the Indian immigrants look within their own community for social interaction. This could not have been less complex and difficult as they came from very different regions of India and in many instances did not even share a common language or dialect.[4] This was especially true in the earliest years of their indentureship. Over the decades these problems eased,

with their adoption of the local patois and the prevalence of Bhojpuri and Hindi.

Even after the expiration of their indentured contracts most Indians who settled permanently in Trinidad and Guyana did so in rural areas, often forming villages that were predominantly Indian. Some of the earliest land settlement schemes by the two colonial governments also facilitated the development of exclusive ethnic enclaves especially amongst the new immigrant settlers. In a historical review of Indian immigrant demographics in Trinidad and Guyana in the period 1871 to 1946, the census officials noted this pattern:

> In rural Trinidad the East Indians are the largest racial group, although not constituting a majority. In rural British Guiana they form an absolute majority, accounting for 54 percent of the total rural population.[5]

An important, though not the only factor which impacted both men and women's lives was the ratio of men to women. The proportion of women to men remained consistently low throughout the period of indentured immigration. Between 1876 and 1917, the proportion of women immigrants in Trinidad and Guyana fluctuated between 40 percent to 45 percent.[6] The unequal sex ratio of the Indian population improved only gradually as greater numbers of immigrants became permanent colonists in their new adopted homes. By 1901 for instance, the percentage ratio of women amongst Indians born in Trinidad was better than the male/female ratio amongst immigrants from India.

Table 6.1 Gender breakdown of Indian population in Trinidad (1891 and 1901):

1891

	Males	Females	Total
Total Population of Trinidad	117,060	101,321	218,381
Total Indian Population	42,918	27,324	70,242
Trinidad Born (of Indian parents)	12,765	11,883	24,648
Immigrants born in India	30,153	15,441	45,594

1901

	Males	Females	Total
Total Population Of Trinidad	144,491	129,408	273,899
Total Indian Population	50,551	35,840	86,391
Trinidad Born Indians	19,952	18,762	38,714
Immigrants born in India	30,599	17,078	47,677

Source: Censuses of Trinidad and Tobago, 1891 and 1901

While the sex ratio did improve amongst the Indo-Guyanese and Indo-Trinidadian populations settled in independent villages, it remained unequal even as late as 1946, when the West Indian Census reported that amongst the "Asiatic populations" (which included Chinese immigrants as well) the ratio of males was 1,079 per 1,000 females in the period between 1943 and 1946. The higher number of men to women shaped a social and sexual dynamic within the group which facilitated a degree of choice for women, but a choice that was often abrogated by control and violence. While men sometimes found it difficult to find stable and long-lasting

relationships with their female compatriots, the women had a larger pool from which to choose their partners. Economic independence (even with the rigors of hard work and minimal wages) and a larger proportion of males to choose their partners from, gave the women greater scope to exercise their sexuality and form relationships that they saw most suitable to their needs and desires. At first glance then, it would seem that both indentured and free Indian women workers could negotiate their status advantageously. However their immigrant condition as subordinate female workers in a racially divided plantation society makes any such easy generalizations of their so called "freedoms" and advantages difficult. The relations within their own ethnic community as well as their bargaining for location in the racially segmented plantation society as new immigrant settlers further complicated Indian women and men's constructions of their social and sexual selves. A disproportionate sex ratio amongst the immigrants alone does not explain the nature of relationships that emerged within the group.

Colonial discourse on women's sexuality and social behavior readily typecasted women into immoral she-devils whenever women disrupted the prevailing patriarchal contract or expressed their sexuality in contradiction to prevailing Victorian norms of British colonial society or Brahmanical expectations of Indian men. Moral disapproval was clearly evident in missionary John Morton's observations regarding Indian women's sexual behavior as he noted in his Memoirs:

> There are no zenanas[7] in Trinidad. Our women immigrants are not recruited from the class that in India are shut up in zenanas. In Trinidad they find themselves of added importance through the small proportion of their sex. They have great freedom of intercourse and much evil example around them....On the other hand many are beautiful and lovable, faithful to their husbands and devoted to their children. This, however, is by no means the rule.[8]

Colonial observations of social relationships in the immigrant Indian community that could not be easily explained by the norms of contemporary Victorian society were unhesitatingly dismissed as abnormal, deviant, and even evil. It was not an uncommon belief that was voiced often in colonial official and non official discourse, that Indian women's "immoral behaviors" were due not only to their independent status as wage earners and the scarcity of their numbers on plantations, but also could be attributed to the low echelons of Indian society from which they were recruited. Bronkhurst doing missionary work amongst Indian immigrants in Guyana articulates some of these beliefs in two separate monographs:

> We must bear in mind that the great majority of women imported from Calcutta are very loose in their habits: they were bad in Calcutta so they will continue to remain in Demerara.[9]

> Though the Indian indentured woman in the colony feels that she is independent of her husband, as she has to earn her own living by working in the field, and gets her weekly wages into her own hands from the overseer's table, the male immigrant does everything at home to humble her and treat her more like an irrational than a rational being. Hence the many unfortunate disputes between husbands and their wives or keepers....The condition of the

> Indian women has been greatly improved by immigration; and as women are very scarce in the colony, they show to some extent their power over the men. They are so protected by the government of the colony, that they think they can exchange one lord and master for another with the greatest ease.[10]

Bronkhurst goes on to discuss male responses to women's sexual libido, revealing in this diatribe his own and the dominant patriarchal concerns of the dominance of man over woman:

> Jealousy, one of the strongest passions of human nature prevails extensively among the coolies. I have never met with a more jealous set of people than they are....The coolies are jealous of their wives. I believe this is entirely owing to the degraded manner or condition in which the females are kept; and this state of unequality of women leads to serious evils. The men, of course, will attempt to justify the consequences of such a condition; and when the women do wrong, there is no end to inflicting punishment upon them. *The men are obliged to govern the wives with the utmost strictness, or they would not only ruin their husbands but themselves also.* The rod and blows are freely laid upon them, especially when they have, or imagine they have, cause to suspect the fidelity of the wife.[11](my emphasis)

The patriarchal rights to male control of women's sexuality, and the need to protect her from herself justified male violence and domination in contemporary colonial male observers' eyes. The colonial concern was to find suitable legal avenues for this form of domination and "protection." There was, not surprisingly, no discussion of men's sexual behavior or mores, except mentioned in passing that men often changed partners as well, the same "crime" for which women were quickly labeled as excessively libidinous and immoral.

Colonial official and non official observations of immigrant men and women's social and sexual behavior was complicit not only with patriarchal assumptions of what constituted right and wrong behavior, but also was most often ethnocentric and racially derived. The narrative of social behavior and sexual politics within the immigrant Indian community in Trinidad and Guyana, if taken uncritically from such sources, would suggest that Indian women under indenture and outside it were reigning free and choosing their "freedoms" to their utmost advantage. Women in such a discourse were powerful, free, and used this condition towards great evil and immorality on plantations and the villages. Men on the other hand, were driven to control, violence, and murder because of their "natural" propensity to jealous and irrational behavior. Clearly such a narrative was deeply flawed as neither female nor male immigrants could escape the reality of their subjugated condition as indentured workers on plantations, nor erase their immigrant condition by which they entered Trinidadian and Guyanese colonial society as outsiders, racially separate, despised by most, and at the lowest ranks of plantation society. The material and psychological factors of redefining their status from transient migrant workers to becoming permanent citizens are important in understanding the ways in which immigrant women and men interacted with each other and with the larger society. Immorality of women and jealousy of men, naturalized in contemporary colonial discourse, nor even the scarcity of

women can be the parameters to understand immigrant women and men's sexual politics and social relations. Scarcity of women on the sugar plantations has been advanced in historical writings to be an important reason for women's social advantage and sexual freedom. While partially responsible for certain forms of relationships to emerge in the immigrant community, this condition alone was not responsible for the negotiations and contestations between the genders, or even how masculinity and femininity were defined within this group.

It could be simplistically argued that the situation was quite similar to what existed in India, especially in the agricultural countryside.[12] In India too, in the late nineteenth century, the ratio of female to male population was low.[13] Although there is no single or simple explanation for the lower ratio of females to males, the practice of female infanticide in certain regions of India, to some degree, attributed to this ratio. Male children were more valued than females who were seen as financial burdens to society.[14] Women worked in the agricultural, manufacturing, and construction sectors of the Indian economy. Although the breakdown of the female workforce in the nineteenth century is not available, the figures from the 1901, 1911 and 1921 censuses show significant numbers of female workers in different sectors of the economy.[15] However, the women had little say in the choice of partners and their social and sexual lives were strictly controlled by an established patriarchy.[16] Why, then do we imagine that women had any

degree of control over their social and sexual lives in their new homelands? Scarcity of numbers alone cannot adequately explain the relatively greater sense of choice that women exercised on the plantations.

The social and economic realm that they encountered on the sugar plantations was radically different from the life they had led in India. They came from widely different regions of India and were drawn from different castes and religious backgrounds. Morton Klass, writing in the early 1960s, on cultural persistence in a village in Trinidad composed largely of Indians, notes that the sense of community in the earliest years of the indentureship experiment amongst different groups of Indians was nebulous at best. He explains thus:

> although they shared a common culture, they derived from different villages scattered over northern India. The first settlers were not kinsmen or village-mates coming back together after long separation; they were strangers to one another who shared only a common memory of membership in roughly similar kin groups and communities. ...Apart from ...internal difficulties,...the immigrants to Trinidad faced serious external problems. The nature of labor on the sugar plantations operated to weaken important elements of the East Indian social structure such as caste.[17]

The constricting confines of barrack life on sugar plantations was in no small measure responsible for the fractured, dehumanizing, and often times violent social existence that Indian workers experienced. The physical construction of barracks did little to facilitate privacy and

decency of family life for the workers. G. William Des Voeux, a magistrate of Demerara between 1865 and 1870 complained:

> ...The immigrants are allowed considerably less room on the average than convicts in English prisons;...the great majority of the houses in the "nigger yards" (as they are still ordinarily called) which are allotted to immigrants are built of two stories and consist of a number of small rooms....Most managers have,...been compelled to allow a separate room to each married couple and their children, though three , four and even more single men, are, I know, frequently crowded in the same place. But married and single alike have to use passages, sheds, euphemistically termed kitchens, and other conveniences, common to many others differing in caste and sometimes in race.[18]

The in-betweenness (i.e. of belonging to neither the plantation society, nor completely governed by the rules of the society they had left behind) that Indians experienced in the early decades impacted women and men in different ways. Given the women's' independent status as contractual cane workers, their fewer numbers, and the advantage of a social realm that was being produced by their new experiences and without set patterns of values and conduct, they could, when and if they wanted to, choose their relationships as they saw fit for their new circumstances.[19] But these choices made by women were often questioned by men, and sometimes restricted in violent ways.

Men and women formed relationships in the immigration depots in Calcutta and elsewhere and on the ships that transported them to the plantations. These came to be known as ship or depot marriages and had no legal or ritual

recognition, except as an understanding between two consenting adults.[20] There were some efforts to regulate these unions, but in most instances they were open-ended with little of the familial, kin, and societal obligations and sanctions associated with a marriage (either legal or religious). Bronkhurst describes these relationships as "runaway matches":

> I must say, however, that when persons emigrate to distant foreign countries in search of wealth and work, in may instances married men and women leave their wives and husbands behind them till they return to their country and form what we may call temporary *runaway match* or marriage with others at or before they reach the several emigration depots at Calcutta and Madras, and they embark as husbands and wives to their new destinations, and all such who land in British Guiana are duly recorded or registered as married people....[21]

Apart from forming relationships with their fellow laborers at depots, ships, and on plantations, many women were known to have had sexual relationships with the plantation hierarchy -- primarily the overseers and managers. There is nothing in the correspondences and memoirs which tell us whether these relationships were negotiated by women to leverage gains in their work condition, or was an exploitative exercise of power by the plantation hierarchy, or simply mutual attraction.[22] Not surprisingly, men not women, frequently complained to the Protector of Immigrants about the "irregularities" of such relationships. These relationships reveal the internal tensions amongst Indians. The men felt inadequate and threatened, for they could

neither protect their women against exploitation, nor more importantly could they control their autonomy. The need to draw clear boundaries of sexual interaction and protect "ours" from outsiders originated on plantations.

The terminology that is frequently used in the correspondences to describe the flexible, temporary, and often times, volatile relationships that emerged amongst the Indian laborers reveals the official biases. Women were either "lured", "enticed", "kidnapped", "appropriated", "seduced" by men, or were immoral prostitutes.[23] Very little agency is afforded to these women, who in a literal reading of these correspondences become mere objects of sexual gratification.

Colonial discourse on women's behavior was often contradictory, and steeped in patriarchal observations. While on the one hand they were often portrayed as victims of the rapacious lust and violent jealousy of the "hindu" man, at other times women were seen as the instigators of rampant immorality by blatant exhibition of disloyal sexual behavior. Both these narratives were deeply implicated in the prevailing imperial stereotypes of "uncivilized native" behaviors. Women were neither merely victims or victimizers, but subjects who at the crucial historical moment of settlement were sometimes colluding and often colliding with fellow men and the larger male ethos of colonial plantation society.

Women were not necessarily in all instances, "enticed" away. They frequently took matters into their own hands and left the man if he proved incapable of providing them adequate economic and social stability. In a conversation with Sarah Morton (wife of John Morton of the Presbyterian Church), one immigrant woman explained the rationale of most women's decision to leave a relationship. Sara Morton makes the following observation about women's behavior and the conversation she had with an Indian woman:

> A group of women newly returned from field work salute me thus: "your disciple is going to church now." There is a spice of malice in this, for the woman indicated (as a disciple was not baptized with us) and has left her married husband for another. I answered "that will do her no good unless she change her living." *"What can she do?" says one, "This husband takes better care of her than the other one did."*[24] (my emphasis)

Neither did all sexual relationships between women and men fall into traditionally recognizable categories such as marriage or cohabitation outside wedlock. Official memoirs reported instances of polyandrous practices, where three or four men lived with a single woman in, what a sheriff of British Guiana, Henry Kirke observed, "apparent contentment."[25] Most contemporary colonial representation of the Indian immigrant social ethos was cast in negative terms as something shocking, shameless, and abnormal needing immediate reform through Christian missionary or other means. But for the men and women who experimented with different forms of family organization and living patterns which did

not necessarily fit into accepted norms, these arrangements were not attempts to behave abnormally or to shock prevailing bourgeois sensibilities. For the men and women these relationships were rational in their eyes and an effort to make their lives socially meaningful. Sara Morton's conversations with different Indian women reveal the rich texture and diversity of experience that men and women negotiated with each other and with the larger plantation society. Morton, describing one woman's reaction to her husband taking another wife, notes in her diary:

> A woman who had left her husband because he had taken another wife, said to me in the calmest possible way, "you know, it would not be pleasant for two of us in one house." "And where are you now?" Unhesitatingly she mentioned the name of her newly adopted husband.[26]

Particularly revealing are the contracts of marriage that were written up between the women and men. These were in the nature of "bonds" and signed by official witnesses from the plantation. The text of these contracts tell us of the nature of relationships that women and men established. One such marriage contract is worded thus:

> An agreement entered into this 25th. day of April, 1870, between the man Ermeiner and the female Nelliama...they both agree to live with each other as man and wife in the presence of these witnesses. The man Ermeiner agrees to pay all her debts, which debts amount to $37, which she owed to the man Ram Sammy...and *the woman Nelliama agrees in case she leaves the man Ermeiner to pay the sum of $40* in addition to the money paid by the man Ermeiner, and which she agrees to pay in case she leaves him for another man. Plantation Enmore, 25th. April. (my emphasis)[27]

The payment of the woman's debt can be seen as a form of "bride price,"[28] a customary exchange during marriage which was prevalent in parts of India and in all probability familiar or a remembered practice included by the immigrants in this "bond." The contract was established between two consenting adults without the interference of either the patriarchal authority of the family or of the colonial state. Most such contracts were not recognized or enforced by the colonial state. Additionally, the economic and social transaction described in the bond was without the mediation or ritual sanction of religion as was normally the way in which most Indian marriages (Hindu and Muslim) were celebrated. The last, and perhaps the most significant clause in this contractual marriage were the words "in case she leaves the man" -- suggesting that desertion by women was a common specter hanging over men's lives. Here was an attempt to make the woman pay for her actions.

These forms of marriage contracts, closely reminiscent of the Islamic Nikah (marriage) practices, were taken up by non-Muslims as well. However, these marriage contracts differed from the traditional Islamic practice in one critical arena. While Nikah agreements specified the man's obligation to pay maintenance severance to the woman in case of talaq or divorce, in these Indian contracts there was a special twist, whereby, a woman was to pay for damages in the instance of desertion by her. There were no similar stipulations for the concerned man. These stipulations were

indirectly aimed at restricting the woman's expression of sexuality and show how power was often times exercised locally by Indian men over women without the state's oversight. The enforceability of such stipulations were in most instances outside the realm of law, and chances of the woman being violently abused or even killed, if she did not abide by the contract were quite high in the period between 1845 and 1917.

Scarcity in numbers did not in all instances mean a greater degree of control over women's social relations.[29] It proved to be a double-edged sword that worked both ways. While it enhanced the worth of the girl child, it brought with it some unwelcome social evils. Since young women were sought after, they fetched "bride prices" which was sometimes used by poverty stricken parents to give their young girls (even eight and nine year old) in marriage to the men who promised them the best price, regardless of the wishes of the girl or the man's age and suitability. There were cases where young girls were married off to much older men. Indebtedness of parents was sometimes exploited by money lenders (primarily Indians) in gaining their daughters in marriage. Kirke notes in his memoir of 1898, of the ways in which a woman could be exploited:

> A little East Indian girl was giving her evidence about the defendant, who recently proposed marriage to her under peculiar circumstances. The girl's mother owed defendant a debt, in settlement of which he wanted her cow. But he also wanted the woman's daughter, and proposed for her hand, on condition the cow went as dowry. "'No,' said

> me mudder, 'you can take de gal and leff the cow, no so take de cow, and leff de gal.'" Here the little maiden became excited, and with raised voice informed the court - "And belieb me, Sah, de beast leff me wid me mudder, and took de cow."[30]

Sometimes women (more accurately young girls) who had been "given away" in such manner succeeded in running away from these forced unions. As one magistrate in Trinidad noted, there were cases of desertions "where the females had been married at an early age when they did not know their own minds and could not exercise free choice."[31]

A variety of relationships flourished between women and men. Between marriage, spinster hood, and bacherlordom there existed different patterns of cohabitation or "companiage."[32] Freedom of the kind that women enjoyed in the decades under indenture had less to do with permanence and more with instability, hostility, and violence that became part of their experience.

Quite frequent and troubling was the recurrence of violence against women by their male partners. Often, unable to control or restrict women by any legal means, the men resorted to homicide against their female victims. These "crimes of passion" were against women who left their spouses or broke any kind of social contract that they may have entered with men. Of such crimes that were reported, an immigration return for Trinidad shows that in five years (ending 1864), at least 19 "coolies" had been convicted of murder and 14 of the murder victims were women.[33] Between

1872-80 all the 22 murders reported in Trinidad were of Indian women and all were wives. Between 1881-89 out of 45 murder victims, 27 were females and 24 of these were wives and between 1890 and 1899, 73 percent of the murders reported among Indian immigrants in Trinidad were women.[34] Conditions in Guyana were similar, where the colonial bureaucracy was concerned about the increasing incidence of violence between the sexes in the immigrant Indian community.

Table 6.2 Murders by Indian immigrants in Guyana (1886-1890)

Year	Wives by Husband or Reputed husband	Women by Men	Men By Men	Total Murders
1886	3	3	3	9
1887	8	1	-	9
1888	10	2	1	13
1889	3	-	2	5
1890	1	-	-	1
Total	25	6	6	37

Source: D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration to British Guiana.

The Annual Reports of the Immigration Agent General in Guyana which cites the above statistics explained the context of these crimes, suggesting that often the violence against women was accompanied by male suicides, exposing the raw tensions in plantation society. Examining the circumstances of the "wife murders" the reports highlight:

> In the other cases one was that of an indentured woman who left her husband in consequence of his bad treatment, and as she refused to return to him, he murdered her in the field where she was working and then attempted to commit suicide....In one case the man committed suicide after the murder; in another insanity following on the sentence of death prevented its being carried out.[35]

Table 6.3: Suicides amongst immigrants in Guyana (1886-1890)

Year	Number of Suicides
1886	5
1887	4
1888	5
1889	5
1890	9

Source: D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration to British Guiana.

The violence that accompanied such crime against Indian women has been described and analyzed frequently in the colonial and plantation circles. In a manner similar to the explanations of social and sexual patterns amongst Indians, colonial discourse here too was contradictory and quick to assign blame on the "hindoo coolie" and the vagaries of "oriental jealousy." The Protector of Immigrants, Henry Mitchell observed in an annual report of 1881, "the inequality of the sexes has apparently very little to do with this form of domestic sacrifice. The cause lies deeper in the breeding and blood of the Hindoo, and in his religious creed...."[36] The violence that accompanied the murders was seen in racial terms. It was attributed to the socio-cultural context from which the "hindoo" or "asiatic" derived his beliefs. Many immigration reports note that the Indian man saw the woman as a mere chattel undeserving of respect and responsible for the violence against her.[37] Kirke gives a graphic and racially perceived description in his memoirs:

> In European countries the rage of the injured husband is usually directed against the man

> who has dishonoured his bed and wrecked his home. In the earlier days he would kill him... or hire an assassin to murder him.... Now he tries to cast him heavy damages in the Divorce court. But the Asiatic looks upon his wife as the chief offender...if a hindoo he mutilates her by chopping off her nose, breasts, or arms, and if in a violent rage, hacks her to pieces with his cutlass...the mild hindoo is generally worthy of his epithet, but when his passions are aroused he becomes violently excited, and is then a dangerous person. He is very superstitious, believes in charms, witches, the evil eye and the turned down thumb....[38]

These crimes were not simply a matter of "blood", "breeding" or "religious creed" of the "Hindoo man" as described in many reports of the period. The crimes can best be understood within the larger framework of the economic, social, and domestic space that the immigrants experienced and created on the plantations. Their immigrant condition as laborers economically degraded and socially outcast had dehumanizing influence on the male psyche. In the plantation ethos they lost even the last vestige of control, namely women's sexuality. Coming from patriarchal societies in India, where despite economic destitution they had a degree of patriarchal authority, this absence of authority and control was deeply resented. Jealousy and unhappiness may have been factors in the perpetuation of such crimes, but the fact that most of the violent murders reported took place on plantations rather than in Indian villages suggest that larger social and psychological implications of plantation indentured life have to be taken into account as well.

Gender roles and social hierarchy on the plantations were not rigidly established or enforced as seen in the various ways in which women could override "naturalized" roles of sexual acquiescence and domesticity. Neither were the men, the "natural" or socially established authority within the family. Narrow, prescribed gender roles and sexual division of labor did not thrive automatically or naturally in the new environs of the plantation. Roles were contested and reversed. Men alone did not work the cane fields, nor women remain isolated at home. While the overlapping of roles and hierarchies meant degrees of choice for women, the same was not true for men. Men did not exercise absolute patriarchal control over the domestic space. Marriage, in many instances, was not permanent where the man could expect to keep his wife at home, obedient and dutiful to her husband's and family's needs rather than her own. The men felt threatened by the loss of control and authority within the family and social relations outside it, as well as the open ways in which women expressed their individuality. Desertion, to many men, was the last straw. Resorting to violence was one means of exercising power over the expressions of "freedom" by the women. In almost all cases of "wife murders" that are discussed, men killed those who "deserted" them. Women did not always leave their spouses or partners for other, more suitable men. In many instances it was primarily to escape a bad marriage or an exploitative partnership. They frequently left to lead their lives alone,

or in some cases where they were too young to do so, would go back to their mother's house.[39] To many men, desertions of any kind, even when it did not involve adultery or promiscuous behavior (in their eyes) was perceived as loss of authority and respect in the community.

The phenomenon of wife killing reveals the nature of unrest that simmered amongst the male Indian laboring class and the social and domestic space that the women had in the embryonic stages of establishing a new immigrant society -- adjusting, rearranging, and setting patterns of social relations amongst their own members and with the larger plantation society. Male concerns of retaining "tradition", a desire to reestablish patriarchal codes of honor and propriety familiar but not forgotten from the old country, a need to have a degree of control in social and family matters, and women's contestations over proscriptive roles and definitions of what was "honorable", reasonable, and rational sexual and social behavior were some of the most volatile areas of renegotiation between the sexes and defined to a large extent the nature of sexual politics in the Indian immigrant community in this period.

The "cane" and "cutlass" proved to be metaphorical seesaws which worked both at "liberating" (in the limited sense vis-a-vis men) and "debilitating" women's lives on the plantations. While the imagery of "cane" and "cutlass" can be used to represent one reality of social relations between the sexes, this conflictual bi-polar representation of Indian

women as "free" and "unfree" simultaneously, gives voice to only one aspect of their experience. Without necessarily underplaying the importance of their experience as cane workers which afforded them a sense of economic independence or the graphic violence of the cutlass on their bodies which marred that freedom often, women's social experience in the period under study mirrored a reality more complex than these two contradictory experiences.

In an immigrant community needing to give social and ritual meaning to their new lives, women's role as symbols and gatekeepers of a "high culture" drawn from their past was equally important in determining the nature of gender politics in the formation of the immigrant social and cultural ethos. An immigrant community setting up boundaries of social interaction between its own members and defining itself in relation to the "others" in society often used women as symbols, or markers of the difference between themselves and others in matters of dress, food, and other cultural carriers. As Kate Young points out in "The Social Relations of Gender":

> Where a group wants to maintain its difference from others, not necessarily in defence of an economic resource, it is common for women to be used as group markers, practicing customs or habits of dress for instance which distinguish 'us' from 'them' or 'you.' Sexual politics often takes the form of struggles over the obligation of women but not men to act as custodians of the group's 'traditions' and culture, and for women to marry inside 'their' culture.[40]

Implied in this, however, is the lack of any agency to the women subjects who are supposedly made the 'carriers' of a remembered culture. While it is true that often, especially with a secure material and psychological base, the community's public spheres and patriarchal institutions impose on women these symbols and responsibilities, in the period of indentureship and early settlement in Trinidad,[41] oral sources allow me to suggest that women themselves actively shaped and articulated the arena of remembered rituals and practices which in turn shaped certain communitarian identities. Male position and power in this early period was fragile, if not non existent and therefore these roles, 'symbols', and 'gatekeeperships' could not have been imposed on the women so easily. Slowly these arenas become more contested, but these early positions of empowerment were not necessarily wiped away. What occurred during this period of early settlement remained critical to future dialogues between the genders over issues of 'community', 'identity' and 'home'. Further, what is important to note here is that neither the 'keepers' of the cultural practices, nor the practices themselves remained static identities or 'originary' reminders from the homes left behind. Women who played such critical roles in reinventing a social fabric were not some ideal type of "Indian woman" often constructed in the popular imagination of various contemporary observers, nor any aberration to a so called ideal type existing in India. Women and men had been transformed by their experience of migration and indenture, and were also

constitutive of changes that they shaped and adopted in their social milieu in both Guyana and Trinidad.

Indian women became "keepers" of the cultural practices of the old country in not only matters of dress and food, but also in keeping the memory of important socially and culturally significant rituals associated with birth, marriage and death alive. Birthing, parenting, child rearing practices and expertise, songs of celebration, rituals around marriages and death were handed down from mother to daughter and some of these cultural markers have remained alive to this day.[42]

Anna Mahase (Sr.) born in 1899 in Trinidad of Indian parents who converted to Presbyterian Christianity has written a valuable autobiography in which she describes her early life growing up around missions and later becoming a teacher in the Presbyterian Mission Schools established by John Morton. In "My Mother's Daughter", Anna Mahase (Sr.) gives an interesting account of her mother Rookabai, who came as an indentured worker from India, later christened as Elizabeth Burns, and her influence on family and social life. Describing her early life in her parents' household Anna Mahase (Sr.) writes:

> During the years 1904 to 1908, many changes took place....My mother was always our play-mate and organised all our games....My father and mother were both great storytellers. They told their stories in Hindi, because we all spoke Hindi at home and with our friends....
> ...My mother, though a Christian and the wife of a preacher, still kept some of the Hindoo traditions and customs and particular ways of life....
> Another instance to show how my mother liked to organize occasions to bring her friends and the village women together, was this. In the month of July, for the whole month, every

> night the women and girls would gather to ride a rope and board swing put up on a mango tree....The women, maybe four at a time would sit on the bench, while two women or boys would push from either end, to the laughter and enjoyment of all. *My mother was a born leader of women and children.*[43] (emphasis in the original)

It was in this exclusively female world, largely undocumented by official or missionary scribes, that women in all probability experienced greatest degree of enjoyment and established their own codes of social behavior, and definitions of femininity.

Marriage was one such arena where religion, ritual and a sense of belonging came to play in the imagining of the Indian community, and where often borrowings from different traditions were not uncommon. The institution itself was a site of contentious debate, where the colonial state did not recognize the validity of Hindu and Muslim marriages till as late as 1881. It was only then that a law was passed which recognized the legality of Indian religious marriages. To the colonial powers - the church, the plantation bureaucracy, and the state, the 'distinctiveness' and 'differences' had negative connotations of being "heathen", "unchristian" or simply illicit and/or illegal, while for the community the elaborate ceremonies around marriage were celebratory and an occasion to erase the dull monotony of hard work on estates. This was an arena where they could remember, reimagine, and valorize a whole host of social/secular/religious identities, larger and more meaningful than the narrow material sense in

which contemporary plantation society viewed them - either, in the strictly utilitarian sense as indentured workers, or as interlopers and competitors of scarce resources.

While it is not possible to reconstruct the extent to which the idea and practice of arranged marriages as prevalent in India at the time had reemerged in the popular imagination of this community, the sexual politics of the workers, discussed early in the chapter suggests, that a wide range of cohabitation patterns existed in this period. The ceremonies and rituals of marriage, drew from varying traditions, memories, and imaginations. The female world came alive on such occasions, where sexually explicit dances and songs were not uncommon. The ceremonies of maticore and laawa were important occasions for shared memories and communitarian dialogue - a few moments of respite from the alienated existence of plantation life. The exchange of religious ritual and practices between Hindus and Muslims was also not uncommon and is not surprising since in their uprooted condition they shared common anxieties and goals and some common remembrances from their imagined "homeland." Additionally, it was not an uncommon feature to find persons with different religious leanings as members belonging to the same family.[44]

It is evident from several respondents' testimonies that by early twentieth century, when arranged marriages were becoming the norm again, it was the father or male head of household who controlled the 'public' negotiations of the marriages of their dependents and progeny, but it was mothers

or the female head who had the responsibility of taking care of all the arrangements for the wedding itself. As one respondent in her interview to Patricia Mohammed, remembers of her own wedding arrangement, "what the father say, what the sai (faqir) say, what the Imam say that goes....but taking care of the actual wedding was mother's."[45] By early part of the century, the public sphere was slowly becoming institutionalized with the patriarchal domain of fathers, imams, and pundits taking control of crucial private social and sexual decisions. Clearly, by early twentieth century the male and female worlds were getting separated and distinct, although not in any grand institutional scale. There was for instance, no largescale withdrawal of women from agricultural work in this period and women continued to work alongside men on sugar estates and peasant lands.

Religious identities in their everyday practices perhaps saw the most dynamic arena of dramatic rupturing as a result of the experience of migration and indenture, and yet Muslim and Hindu Indians drew on their religious traditions and rituals (of which there were a very wide and discrete variety to choose from) for a reconstruction of social identities and ideas on "masculinity" and "femininity." These clashed frequently with contemporary missionary efforts to "civilize heathen" practices and make women and men conform and behave in accordance with Christian values.

Both as a tool of survival in a hostile climate which ridiculed it often as uncivilized, and also to chalk out its

difference and distinctiveness from "others" in society, that the community tried to project the uniqueness and "greatness of Indian culture and tradition" to which they staked their own membership. The reliance of Muslim and Hindu Indians on their indigenous religious beliefs for a reconstruction of social identities and ideas on "masculinity" and "femininity" clashed frequently with contemporary missionary efforts to "civilize heathen" practices and make women and men conform and behave in accordance with Christian values. Missionary John Morton writes about his frustrations in getting converts in his Memoirs:

> In dealing with intelligent Mohammedans the missionary requires to be thoroughly prepared to meet their arguments against the genuineness and authority of the Scriptures,...Much more is necessary when the authority of the Koran is to be assailed. In dealing with the Hindoos the ground is to some extent changed, for they do not take offense at the doctrine of a divine incarnation, and so they often listen to the gospel without a single objection....He still believes in the incarnations of deity described in the Hindu books,...[46]

John Morton goes on to describe the immigrants' desire to maintain the customs of their ancestors:

> "Do as your fathers did. "Follow the custom," comes in to solve the difficulty. In all matters, even to the cutting of hair, the custom is followed. Our fathers were wiser than we. It is disrespect to them to adopt anything new.[47]

Despite the problems of getting large numbers of immigrants to convert to Christianity, the Presbyterian Church's influence and authority in their social lives was not

insignificant, particularly in education and marriage. Both indentured and non indentured Indian parents were reticent in sending their children to Mission schools. Children's labor was needed on the plantations, on Indian peasant lands, and in households for various odd jobs. Often it was not education or its value that immigrants were opposed to, but their hard rural regimen allowed little time for leisure or play even for children. Describing an encounter with an Indian woman during a prayer meeting Sara Morton recalls:

> Just as we rose from prayer before dismissal an angry face was thrust in at the door and an excited voice screamed, "Suncheriah! Suncheriah! why are you sitting down here instead of doing your work?" I said, "Mama, don't be vexed; your daughter has been listening to God's word." "*that is all very well," she said, "but three people are sick in the house and there is no one to bring water for them.*"[48] (my emphasis)

Many parents were also wary of the foreign values that were taught in the schools. Most were particularly hesitant in sending girls for any level of education. The area of frequent clashes between the Church and the immigrants was on the question of girls' education and the age when they should get married. While at this time enrollment of both girls and boys was low, it was particularly difficult to get girls into schools. Sara Morton records some of the conversations with men and women in Morton's memoirs:

> ...The little girls I was in search of have been taken from school by their acting step-father, a Brahman who has always sullenly opposed us....He said, "If you teach a boy you will get some good of it, but a girl is not yours; she is some other man's; why should you

> trouble with her?...Girls are to cook, wash, and to keep the house,...sometimes to worship God.[49]

Already in this early phase of settlement a redefinition of male/female worlds as distinct and different had started taking shape, which would in the post-indenture period after 1917 have more institutional grounding. Conversations with men and women that Sara Morton, wife of missionary John Morton has recorded in Morton's Memoirs, although not allowing us to suggest that any hardened principles of patriarchy were operative at this time, do however tell of the regrouping of gendered values and patriarchal concerns taking hold of people's imagination.

Colonial Perceptions and Interventions

The primary interest of the planters and the colonial authorities was to impose peace, order, and stability on the plantations to enable the smooth working of the sugar economy. All forms of labor unrest were crushed severely by punitive measures and by the intervention of the Protector of Immigrants. The classification of offenses on the plantations reveal the authorities' concern of regulating an uninterrupted work regimen. Thus, clubbed together with serious disruptive labor practices such as absence from work from the estates, desertion, vagrancy, inciting rebellion in the ranks of the workers, were also offenses like "harboring immigrant's wife", "enticing women", "cohabiting with wife of immigrant" etc.[50]

Crimes against women created social unrest and instability amongst the working population and it was to control this aspect, rather than serve justice, that the authorities took such crimes seriously. Crimes meant loss of labor for the planters, as both the convicted man and his female victim were workers. The planters sought punishments of hard labor on the estates rather than imprisonment.

> With regard to lost days... make it optional for the magistrate to punish the offender by fine, imprisonment or an order to make the lost days on the estate itself. This is essential because there are many cases of idleness, where the employer deserves to have his lost time repaid, but will not run the risk of ruining his labor by sending to the gaol.[51]

There was much debate about the nature of the crimes popularly known as "wife murders" in colonial circles. While some ascribed the violence of the men toward their women to their low numbers vis-a-vis the men, many others saw this problem as primarily due to the loose morals and low character of the women themselves. Most were inclined to believe that the few women who migrated were from the lowest strata of Indian society, and by virtue of that position alone, were immoral. In 1864 Governor Hincks of British Guiana wrote to the Emigration Board thus:

> Crimes of violence among the coolies arise mainly from jealousy and the disproportion of the sexes is much to be regretted but,...that is not sufficient to account for the violence of the men towards the women with whom they cohabit.... (He) attributes such crimes to a great extent to the low class of women who migrate and the little value set by Asiatics on female life.[52]

Although there were moments right through the period of indentured immigration when colonial authorities debated the possibilities of increasing the proportion of women to men that were to emigrate from India, this was never seen as a permanent or practical solution to the problem. On the field, the recruiters found it extremely difficult to induce a greater number of women to migrate. By the 1890s many in the colonial circle felt that encouragement should be given to families to migrate rather than increase the number of adult single women. Almost always the authorities conflated loose morality (as they defined it) with the presence of single women. The McNeill Lal report of 1915, making an assessment of the problem, concurred with this prevalent colonialist myth, "unless the women emigrated as wives insistence on a parity between the sexes would be anything but a gain to morality. The additional women would almost all be disreputable." Encouraging emigration of family units, the report had this to say:

> if young girls count towards the percentage, a married couple with two or more girl children will be very desirable recruits. There will be no need to recruit disreputable women and in a very short time the disproportion between adult men and women will be further reduced. There would soon be a substantial and steady increase in the number of marriageable women, while the professional prostitute would tend to disappear.[53]

Every effort was made by the colonial state and immigration authorities in Trinidad, Guyana, and India to encourage the formation of stable families and a family morality that

prescribed to the patriarchal forms that were prevalent in both metropolitan Britain and colonial India. Toward this end, both formal and informal interventions by the state were aimed at keeping man and woman together even against the wishes of the woman.

Rarely does one find women's voices in the colonial correspondences. Nevertheless, they appear frequently in these correspondences, as officials and planters get involved in what they perceive as the "Women's Problem". Discussing the clauses of the Marriage and Divorce Ordinance (1881) that was to regulate the social and sexual sphere of Indian laborers, the Protector of Immigrants writes to the Colonial Secretary thus:

> It is extremely difficult here to prove to the satisfaction of the jury that the offender has enticed away or detained another man's wife, for the wife generally does so to live with a younger or more healthy man and will not admit that she was enticed away or detained as she went of her own accord preferring the man to her husband.[54]

While stable families and marriages were encouraged by the authorities, the contemporary colonial laws (particularly in the early years of indentured migration - between 1845 and 1880) did little to facilitate the easy legalization of Indian marriages and children born of such unions. The rites and customs of marriage (both Hindu and Muslim) was a source of frequent conflict and controversy between the colonial state and Indians in Trinidad and Guyana. The marriages that were contracted under Islamic and Hindu religious rites were

not recognized as legal by the authorities. The Muslim and Hindu priests had no legal sanction to formalize marriages amongst the indentured workers. In Guyana, the Heathen Marriages Act of 1860 stipulated that all marriages in the Indian community of indentured and ex-indentured workers had to be certified by the Immigration Agent-General's office in Georgetown for a fee.[55] This was not practical and hardly ever followed, since most workers were too poor and were residing in far off rural areas to be able to register their marriages by the law of the land. Further, most did not feel the urgency to follow the tedium of registration, when they had celebrated their unions by the customs and rites of their religion. Thus, till the early 1880s, in both Trinidad and Guyana, very few marriages were legal in the eyes of the state. This legal ambiguity about the status of Indian marriages contributed in some measure, to the impermanence of social relations between women and men who had no legal recourse in times when violence erupted between a married couple.

Table 6.4 No. of Indian Immigrant Marriages in Guyana under Ordinance 10 of 1860, Section 2 (1872-1883)

Year	No. of Immigrants Introduced	No. of Marriages
1872	3,556	334
1873	7,512	478
1874	6,009	410
1875	4,346	191
1876	2,932	172

continued on next page

Table 6.4 continued

1877	3,886	212
1878	9,101	850
1879	6,055	353
1880	4,377	243
1881	3,955	206
1882	3,165	184
1883	2,497	170

Source: D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration to British Guiana.

Recognizing the urgency of amending the existing marriage and divorce laws affecting the indentured community, Robert W.S. Mitchell, the acting Agent-General of Immigrants in Trinidad had this to say in 1873:

> ...Indians who have entered into relation of husband and wife in this colony should give notice to the warden of the district where they reside, such notice to be taken as evidence of the fact, and transmitted to the Registrar General's department.
> A short Ordinance might also be passed ...enabling the husband where recognized as such by law to prosecute for abduction before the Stipendiary Magistrates...and that the Magistrates should be empowered to...punish such offenses with a maximum fine.[56]

While official discussion about amending the existing marriage laws continued, in Trinidad it was only in 1881 that a new law relating to the marriage and divorce of immigrants was passed whereby they could legalize their marriages and divorces according to their personal law. By this Ordinance the Muslim and Hindu priests were recognized by the state to conduct the marriages of the community and were authorized to register the same with the state.[57] Such legislation made little impact on the way marriages were conducted or how living arrangements were made between individuals.

Table 6.5 No. of Indian marriages and marriage rate in Trinidad (1886-1890)

Year	Total Marriages	East Indian Christian Marriages	East Indian Civil Marriages	No. of Married in Gen. Pop.	No. of persons married per 1,000 in gen. pop.
1886	574	27	1	1,092	8.8
1887	649	30	--	1,238	9.6
1888	772	48	5	1,438	10.9
1889	766	40	12	1,428	10.5
1890	986	53	12	1,842	13.2

Source: D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration to Trinidad.

In Guyana the Consolidated Ordinance XXV of 1891 made it possible for Hindu, Muslim or Christian priests to solemnize the marriages of Indians with the clearance from Immigration department and the attestation of the marriage by the concerned priest. The travel to Georgetown for registration was eliminated.[58]

Colonial intervention in the face of any real or suspected eruption of domestic violence in the Indian laboring community was not always dictated by grand statutes of law. There were many instances where policy was ad hoc in the form of patriarchal persuasion of the Protector of Immigrants. He was the colonial patriarch who negotiated what was thought to be in the best interest of his "coolie" subjects. Inevitably such interventions were negotiated primarily on behalf of the male population. The colonial authorities perceived it wiser to establish the authority of the males in any domestic squabbles or violence. In the case where Nuseebun left her husband Noorali for another worker

named Konhaye, the Attorney General agreeing with the Immigration Agent General, had this to say:

> If the woman is removed, we separate man and wife, *a proceeding to be avoided;* the danger to be avoided arises from the threats made by Konhaye against Noorali, and that will be removed by the transfer of Konhaye to another estate. The woman's life has not been threatened by her husband. And to such an extent was this principle in one case followed that...if...possible...*not to separate husband and wife whatever she may say.* (my emphasis)[60]

The statement of Imerti, a woman indentured worker's complaint against her husband Sookha, and the way in which this was dealt by the court is another case in point, showing that the colonial authorities were keen on keeping families from breaking up and establishing the man's authority in it in ways they thought was appropriate and clearly against the wishes of the woman concerned. Imerti's statement is an example of the informal ways in which authorities could intervene in the laborers' lives:

> I am not living with Sookha of my own free will but only in consequence of being ordered to do so by the judge. On one occasion I was ill-treated by Sookha that I wrote a petition to the judge complaining of being ill-treated in every way and stating that I would not live with Sookha any longer and wanted to live alone. Mr. Mchugh the interpreter at the court, saw me at the court and coaxed me to go to his house persuading Sookha who followed me up to the court, to induce me to go there, where I was given something to eat. Mr. Mchugh then advised me to go back to my husband and asked me for the petition and took it from me and told me that if Sookha ever ill-treated me again I could come for the petition and prosecute him at Couva....[61]

In the Immigration Ordinance No. 2 of 1887 extensive safeguards were provided for the safety of women workers and for the protection of property of both men and women in case of divorce or desertion by either sex. There were also provisions in the Ordinance to punish and restrict any man who threatened, "enticed" or deserted a woman worker.[61] As seen in the Nuseebun and Noorali and the Imerti and Sookha case, the provisions of punishing or restricting the male worker was only resorted to at the last instance, when every way of persuading the woman to stay had been exhausted. Towards the later period of indentured immigration every effort was made to encourage families, particularly families with girl children to migrate from India as the state saw family immigration as a way to restrict the "low class" of women from migrating thereby reducing social problems on the plantations.

The colonial state actively aided in establishing rules of conduct and patriarchal values to control the social and sexual space of the new immigrants, as a means to curb violence against women and unrest among men. The "subject" of the crimes often became "subjected" to legal and other hidden means of control.[62]

The *"cane"* and the *"cutlass"* serve only as partial metaphors in understanding the social and gender relations that developed in the Indian immigrant community between 1845 and 1917. While the cane economy provided the Indian community's material sustenance in their new homes, the

cutlass, their primary work tool, often became a weapon of violence against women. The nature of violence against Indian women by their male partners and the formal and informal interjections of the colonial state tell us not only of the particular problem of "wife murders", but also of an immigrant society in transition, where women generally lose some of the "freedoms" they may have had in the expressions of their sexuality. The contested, violent, and sometimes conciliatory terrains of social and sexual behaviors can best be understood in the multi-textured realm of day to day experiences of Indian women and men. While the reading of colonial texts, documents, and other non official sources give us a bi-polar imagery of male/female relationships, essentialising their innate victimizer/victim topography, a close reading of the female voices that indirectly emerge from these colonial documents as well as the rare, but extremely precious autonomous female autobiography like "My Mother's Daughter", or oral memories of daughters of Indian indentured workers give us insights into female/female relationships, the female space and its negotiations with an emerging Indian patriarchy on plantations and Indian villages which in many instances were empowering tools, used and handed down from mother to daughter to grand daughter.

Notes

[1]John Morton Memoirs, p.342. A Brahmin widow to Sarah Morton.

[2]Foucault, in his analysis of the "deployment of sexuality" shows that power in relation to sexuality (or as he suggests, power in general), is not to be seen as that which is exercised by state over citizens through various institutions but, which is fluid and exercised between people locally. Power in the Foucauldian sense is "the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable."

Power does not reside in the state apparatus alone, but women and men negotiate and play the politics of power. The expression of sexuality is employed as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, an administration and a population."

[3]San Fernando Gazette, 8 December, 1888.

[4]For the diversity of languages and dialects spoken by Indian immigrants in Guyana see Bronkhurst, The Colony of British Guyana, pp.223-237.

[5]West Indian Census, 1946.

[6]See Table 5 in Appendix A; Also see Chapter II of this thesis.

[7]"Zenana" in Urdu literally translates to the female section of the house. Here in all likelihood it is being used to convey the practice of "purdah" or the strict segregation of the sexes practiced in many segments of colonial Indian society, particularly amongst the upper castes and classes.

[8]John Morton Memoirs, p.185.

[9]Bronkhurst, The Colony of British Guiana, p.244

[10]Bronkhurst, Among the Hindus, pp.144-146

[11]Bronkhurst, The Colony of British Guiana, pp.246-247

[12]I am however not suggesting that the historical situation of colonial India in general and its agrarian systems in particular had any simplistic comparability or blanket similarities with the general colonial situation of Trinidad and British Guiana and particularly with their agrarian systems.

[13]Leela Visaria and Praveen Visaria, "Population (1757-1947),". In The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. 2. ed. Dharma Kumar (Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 463-532.

[14]Ibid., p.484.

[15]J. Krishnamurty, "The Occupational Structure," In The Cambridge Economic History of India, ed. Kumar, p.535.

[16]I qualify this by pointing out that there were regions in India which had strong matriarchal systems of social organization but patriarchy was deeply entrenched in the regions from where the majority of the immigrant workers came to Trinidad and Guyana.

[17]Klass, East Indians in Trinidad, pp.24-25.

[18]Des Vouex, Experiences, p. 131.

[19]For a discussion of caste, identity and social status see sections on Guyana and Trinidad in Barton M. Schwartz, ed., Caste in Overseas Indian Communities.

[20]Gt. Britain Parliamentary Papers XX, C. 3930 (1871). Report of the Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana. (henceforth B.P.P. XX Report)

[21]Bronkhurst, p.147

[22]Pillai, Tivary, Keatinge Report, p. 46. Also see Geoghehan Report, p.99.

[23]Almost all correspondences cited above which deal with "women's problem" on estates have used these terms.

[24]John Morton Memoirs, p. 342

[25]Henry Kirke, Twenty Five Years in British Guiana. (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1898; reprint, Westport, Connecticut: , 1970), p. 218.

[26]John Morton Memoirs, pp.342-343

[27]B.P.P.XX Report, p. 191.

[28]Bride price, different from the practice of dowry, is not unknown in the regions of India from which the immigrants came. By paying a certain amount of money or gifts to the girl's parents, a man could hope to marry her when she came of age. The customary practice of giving bride price was common amongst the lower strata and castes and non propertied agricultural laborers in north India. Dowry or Dan Dahej, on the contrary, is practiced among the higher castes and comprises of gifts, money and property that is given from the bride's side to the groom's family. A portion of this is the bride's personal property. For a discussion of bride price and dowry see Jack Goody and Stanley J. Tambiah, Bridewealth and Dowry (Cambridge 1973). Also, for a revisionist definition in the light of recent scholarship, see Stanley J. Tambiah, "Bridewealth and Dowry revisited: The Position of women in Sub-Saharan

Africa and North India". Current Anthropology 30, no.4 (August-October 1989): 413-435.

[29]For implications of gender on social relations and social formations see Kate Young, "Notes on the Social Relations of Gender," In Gender in Caribbean Development, eds. Mohammed and Shepherd, pp. 97-109.

[30]Kirke, Twenty Five Years, pp. 218-219.

[31]C.O. 384/173 (1889), Annual Immigration Report.

[32]I have taken the term "companiage" from Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery, pp.202-203.

[33]C.O. 318/244 (1864), Governor Hincks of British Guiana to the Emigration Board.

[34]David Trotman, Crime in Trinidad - Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society 1838-1900. (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986), pp. 170-174.

[35]Comins, Note on Emigration to British Guiana, pp.64-65

[36]C.O. 384/134 (1881), Report from the Protector of Immigrants, Henry Mitchell.

[37]C.O. 318/261 (1871), Annual Report of Immigration to Trinidad.

[38]Kirke, Twenty Five Years, p.219.

[39]Ibid., pp. 217-231.

[40]Kate Young, "Notes" in Gender in Caribbean Development, eds. Mohammed and Shepherd, p.108

[41]There are no comparable oral sources available to me for Guyana to make similar observations about women's efforts and dialogues between the genders over issues of 'identity' in the Indo-Guyanese community in the period of indentureship.

[42]Elaborate rituals around these important social and religious events including some of the songs that accompanied these ceremonies was recounted at great detail by Maharani's (an ex-indentured worker from India) daughter. She also talked of how she had learnt these from her mother with whom she would go to these social occasions which she remembers as being primarily female oriented. This interview was conducted by Patricia Mohammed. See University of West Indies, OPREP, OP-62, #31 and 32.

[43]Anna Mahase Snr., My Mother's Daughter - The Autobiography of Anna Mahase Snr. 1899-1978 (Union Village, Trinidad: Royards Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 11-13

[44]Several respondents voiced these opinions to interviewer Patricia Mohammed. See particularly tapes, University of West Indies, OPREP, OP-62, #39, #8

[45]University of West Indies, OPREP, OP-62, #8. (Name of respondent has been withheld for privacy.)

[46]John Morton Memoirs, p.121

[47]Ibid., p.236

[48]Ibid., p. 341-342.

[49]Ibid., p.258

[50]McNeill Lal Report, op.cit., p. 24.

[51]C.O. 384/105 Vol. 1 (1875), Agent General of Immigrants, Robert Mitchell to Governor Henry T. Irving.

[52]C.O. 318/244 (1864), Report from the Emigration Board. Governor Hincks' returns for British Guiana.

[53]McNeill Lal Report, op.cit., pp.314-315. Also see D.W.D. Comins' Report, op.cit.

[54]C.O. 384/155 (1885), Protector of Immigrants to Acting Colonial Secretary.

[55]Mangru, Benevolent Neutrality, p.213.

[56]See also Table 24 in Appendix A

[57]C.O. 384/102 (1873), Annual Despatch of Robert W.S. Mitchell, Acting Agent-General of Immigrants.

[58]Look Lai, Indentured Labor, pp.573-574.

[59]Basdeo Mangru, "The Sex Ratio Disparity and its Consequences under the Indenture in British Guiana". In India in the Caribbean, eds. Dabydeen and Samaroo, p.213.

[60]B.P.P. XX Report, pp. 187-188.

[61]C.O. 384/173 (1889), Imerti's statement to the Court.

[62]Pillai, Tivary and Keatinge Report, pp. 137-139.

[63]For a theoretical discussion of the "female subject" see Teresa de Lauretis, "Feminist Studies/Critical Studies: Issues, Terms and Contexts," in Feminist Studies/Critical Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). Also Berenice A. Caroll ed., Liberating Women's

History: Theoretical and Critical Essays (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). For a discussion of the subjectivity of women and the study of the woman subject as a historical being, particularly with reference to South Asian history see Nita Kumar, "Introduction," in Women as Subjects -- South Asian Histories, ed. Nita Kumar (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994). I thank Sanjam Ahluwalia for bringing this work to my notice.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: TRAVEL AND HOME - A GENDERED READING OF MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT'

they came in ships....

I alone am today alive.
I remember logies, barrackrooms, ranges,
nigga-yards. My grandmother worked in the
field.
Honourable mention.

...Remember one-third quota, coolie woman.
Was your blood spilled so I might reject my
history --
forget tears among the paddy leaves.[1]

The "one-third quota" on ships carrying Indian indentured labor, is the only attention that women indentureds received in much of the historical and sociological scholarship up until the last decade. Yet as Das, herself a descendent of Indian indentured workers, invokes poignantly, the struggles of the "coolie woman" whose blood was spilled metaphorically and physically through decades of displacement, travel, settlement, and mapping of new identities in new homes, cannot be forgotten in the rewriting of these past histories.

Movements of people and displacement of cultures, enslaved, coerced, or free has been an integral part of human history. The Americas were depopulated and repopulated by imperialist displacements, mass migrations both forced and free in the five centuries preceding American contemporary societies. Yet a gendered reading of these migrations is hard to come by in traditional historical scholarship. While not claiming to re-imagine the gender dynamics of all such movements - a project too precocious and grand to warrant

success, this thesis attempts to anticipate the politics of gender in one such "wave" of human migration and settlement from the so called Old to the so called New world, namely that of Indian indentured migration from India to Guyana and Trinidad between 1845 and 1917. A gendered reading of this particular mass migration, undertaken by nineteenth century imperial demands of coerced labor, as shown in the preceding chapters, suggests that the politics of gender was never an unchanging monolith, but dynamic and often included contradictory alignments of different forces and institutions on the one hand, and alliances and contestations between various actors and groups - both male and female on the other.

While gender has been the primary lens through which the story of Indian migration/travel across the kala pani and the social and material construction of settlement/home has been (re)presented in the preceding chapters, implications of race, class, caste, and religion have provided the needed and desired complexity to understand as well as unpack the categories of migration/travel and settlement/home in the particular Indian experience of indenture. This thesis has looked at the ways in which even the presence of the so-called "one-third" quota of female labor, has had important implications for social formations in Trinidad and Guyana. Race relations in post colonial Trinidadian and Guyanese societies where exclusive racial and ethnic enclaves still exist in pockets of the two countries, can be partially explained by the evolution of gender politics that emerged

amongst the newest group of immigrants in these two societies - the Indians. The continued migration of Indian females through the seventy or so odd years of indentureship facilitated greater degree of exclusivity around ethnic and racial boundaries, making racial mixture with other groups less likely, even often becoming arenas of resistance and resentment between different groups.

While this migration pattern did not in any way resemble the largely familial migrations in North America, it did however bring a critical mass of female workers from India throughout the period, whose presence facilitated the recreation of "ethnic hearths", duplicating some remembered features of the old country, but also moving into new areas of gendered negotiations. The emergence, for instance, of jahaji relationships which evolved in this period into a network of fictive kinship, was closely reminiscent of actual kinship networks known and of social importance to immigrants in India. The mapping of an exclusive female space, located around important secular and religious rituals like birthing, child rearing practices, marriage, death, and harvest started taking form on the plantations, and became secure arenas of empowerment and enjoyment for immigrant women in villages. These too were reminiscent of practices quite common in most regions of India, particularly, the form though not necessarily the content of such female spaces. This thesis, however has also tried to project, that notwithstanding the importance of such parallel constructions of social identities

that occurred amongst the immigrants, particularly when they could materially distance themselves from the barrack lives on plantations, the disruptions and challenges to known patriarchal norms and the collision, even sometimes collusion between women and men over social and sexual identities, were clearly the result of their location in a new world of plantations, central to the functioning of its economy but marginal to its society.

While the project of constructing a new "home" - a site of both conflicting and consensual sexual and social identities, continued much after the period of my study, and remains a dynamic site in contemporary Trinidadian and Guyanese societies, Indian women's and men's day to day relations with each other and others, their lived experiences, and negotiations with the larger white and black colonial societies in the period of indentureship is vital in explaining later developments. While I have chosen to study the period of formal indentureship which ended in 1917 in both Trinidad and Guyana, the year 1917 itself, should not be seen as a historical watershed bringing any radical departures to the ways in which social relations of gender or the politics of gender was played out in the Indian immigrant group, but as an ongoing process begun decades ago when greater numbers of Indian workers decided to make Trinidad and Guyana their new homes.

The act of travel, rarely willing or "free" as seen early in this thesis, symbolized the first serious disruption in the

known and familiar sites of social and cultural interaction among immigrant Indian women and men. Hierarchies of caste and the practices of patriarchy were challenged where the most important spaces of social and cultural regrouping like "family", "caste", "marriage", and identities around "masculinity", "femininity", and the relations between the sexes became open to new forms of negotiations, contestations, day to day experiences, and other similar creative processes.

At first glance, such disruptions and challenges to "old world" patriarchal idioms and caste limitations suggest an exhilarating new and dynamic space, particularly for the Indian immigrant woman. Indian women, conditioned by their location and time in history as being on the "borders" or the in-between spaces of colonial plantation society of Trinidad and Guyana, could now, as some have argued, experience the fruits of the travel -- "freedom" away from an "ossified", "repressive" system to a new site which was pristine, pure, and controllable to their liking.[2] It has often been argued that women migrants who made this journey experienced freedom in their new environs. This freedom, according to existing scholarship was based on three important "structures" of experiences of immigrant women: a) the act of migration, the journey itself as an act of deliberated choice[3] b) their entrance into the sugar economy as independent contractual indentured workers earning a wage and, c) their fewer numbers on plantations enabling them to express and control their sexuality.

While each of these three experiences are historical facts that are important in understanding the politics of gender on plantations and villages, and social relations in the community, the critical reading of these facts and complementary evidence dissuades me from drawing any conclusive "emancipatory" picture for women immigrants in the period under study. Indian women's presence on plantations, their travel experiences, and the conflicts and negotiations over the construction of their social and sexual selves, is better understood when we go beyond the paradigm of "unfree-free-unfree" -- a paradigm which implicitly suggests that their "unfree" status in India, improved to some form of "freedom" on plantations, (particularly in the early period of indentureship from 1845 to the 1870s), and gradually became "unfree" with patriarchal regrouping in their new homes in Trinidad and Guyana.

The conflicting gender ideologies around women's status as workers as well as homemakers, were characterized not so much by the metaphor of a pendulum, swinging from one extreme condition of unfreedom to another of freedom, but animated by a panoply of contradictory experiences in the period under study. Arguably, they experienced new ways of exercising control over their social and sexual lives, but this control proved often to be clouded by violence of a plantation existence and of the real dangers of murder and rape. A historicized examination of the three major components of their immigrant condition, namely their migration, their

status as indentured and free workers and their fewer numbers, reveals the hollowness of "freedom" that women often experienced on plantations and villages. First, the journey from rural interiors of India to overseas plantations in Guyana and Trinidad, was dictated by imperial necessities of a controlled labor force. Even when there was deliberated decision to leave poverty behind to start a new life, the immigrant often was misled and ill informed by agents of the imperial recruitment process, trading unknowingly one oppressive life for another. The difficulty of getting the minimum ratio of women migrants made this form of false representation even more rampant in the case of female recruitment.

A detailed study of the gender ideologies operating in the functioning of the plantation economy reiterates the shallow depth of freedom experienced by women workers. In a sexist allocation of work, most women were pushed to under remunerative and unskilled jobs on the plantations, locating them at the lowest rung in the hierarchy of plantation workers. With the passage of time, married women not only alienated their labor, but also the fruits of that labor, as plantation management increasingly negotiated wages with the male heads of household than with the women themselves. Finally, scarcity of their numbers on plantations does not mechanically, or simplistically translate to greater choice or freedom. As this thesis shows, that while women frequently changed partners it was not always done from a situation of

advantage, but often to escape a destructive relationship. Often this "choice", more realistically an escape, was at great cost to individual women as evidenced by the high incidence of "wife murders" and cases of violence and rapes by male immigrants. Scarcity of numbers also brought with it some unforeseen circumstances, like marriages of young girls by poverty stricken parents to the bidder who could provide the highest bride price. While much has been written and characterized as deviant about the frequency with which women entered and left relationships with men, similar actions by men is not dwelt upon as abnormal by colonial discourse. Yet, interestingly this discourse is littered with terms like women being "seduced", "kidnapped", "lured", "enticed", or "appropriated." Male complicity in such instances is never examined in the contemporary discourse of the time, nor is it looked at in any great depth in the historical literature.

Yet, Indian immigrant women cannot be seen as hapless victims of history either, for they challenged or allied with the different patriarchal forces in day to day dealings, but not from any abstract or absolute conditions of freedom or choice. An engaged and critical reading of colonial sources reveals one dominant narrative emerging in these observations which transforms the complexities of immigrant women's and men's identities into simple objects of scrutiny -- with some essential and innate features which guide their explanations of these "native" behaviors. Thus the "hindu" man is jealous and prone to extreme violence, and the "coolie" woman is

immoral and sexually disloyal. Not only is this crude narrative deeply flawed, but the irony of such a construction is that in the assignment of blame, this colonial narrative casts both the male and the female subject simultaneously in the bi-polar role of victimizer/victim. This thesis argues that in order to subvert this colonialist understanding of Indian women's and men's social lives and sexual behaviors, not only do we need to take cognizance of their social status emanating from an imperial plantation nexus, but also look at other arenas of social exchange like women's roles in sustaining independent cultivation after the expiration of indentures, their creative endeavors in nurturing family life, and the emergence of exclusive female spaces where old rituals and customs were remembered as well as new ones forged and handed down from mother to daughter. While at one level, the immigrant woman negotiated and often challenged patriarchal imperial and native attempts at defining her sexual and social behavior and assignments of proscriptive roles to her, at another level she was often pushed to the margins of the economy and society by unwritten and unsaid, yet shared patriarchal pacts of British and Indian, Victorian and Brahmanic male gender values. The bi-polar category of victimizer/victim, represents only a partial and somewhat limiting history of immigrant women's and men's experiences in the period under study.

The period of indentureship from 1845 to 1917 can be characterized as shifting, protean, and reflective of a high

level of experimentation and adaptation to the new realities of the immigrant condition of women and men. This immigrant condition of indentured and free workers in this early period can best be understood by borrowing the metaphor of "inhabiting borders", a cultural, social, and political space used to describe the post colonial condition of immigrants in late twentieth century.[4] Yet, this borrowed analogy from recent epistemology comes closest to defining the past histories of Indian women and men inhabiting the narrow space between white plantation and black peasant societies, belonging to neither but relational to both. The "border" analogy is particularly helpful in understanding the period of indentureship, where cultural production and social identities of the new immigrants in Trinidadian and Guyanese plantation society were characterized not by "purity" and "authenticity," but remained a conflictual and creative time for improvisations. These informal gestures, however gave way to more formal attempts to create a new national culture and an ideal "Indian womanhood" based on an imagined and invented purity of a "classical Indian culture and patriarchy" in the decades after indentureship, and continues into contemporary times. The impulses for such identity formation in the post indenture period arise out of complex factors, not the least of which is the politics of marginality. Such concerns are outside the scope of this thesis, but the "tradition" of improvisations and negotiations on matters of sexuality and social identity carried on by the early immigrant Indian women

and men -- the subjects of this history, remains vibrant and alive to this day in dealing with contemporary concerns of identity.[5]

Notes

[1]Mahadai Das, "They Came in Ships" in Creation Fire - A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry, ed. Ramabai Espinet (Toronto, Canada: Sister Vision, 1990), pp. 187-188.
Mahadai Das is an Indo-Guyanese poet.

[2]See Emmer, ed., Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labor before and after Slavery (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Niijhoff), 1986.

[3]The view that the act of migration in and of itself was indicative of the freedom and independence Indian women immigrants experienced is suggested by Rhoda Reddock, "Indian Women and Indentureship," pp. 27-49

[4]Concerns with the postcolonial immigrant subject in the age of transglobal capitalism and labor, has animated discussions particularly in anthropology and cultural studies. The critique of culture as a homogenous and closed category and the methods of social analysis of how cultures produce themselves in the postcolonial situation have generated some useful categories of understanding the shifting and protean nature of any immigrant society. Although the subject of "borders" and "border crossings" is a vast, and ever growing field of scholarship, I have found some of its methods useful in understanding my area of research. I have borrowed eclectically from Renato Rosaldo's chapter "Border Crossings" in Culture and Truth - The Remaking of Social Analysis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp.196-217. Also from Ruth Behar's chapter "Translated Woman" in Translated Woman - Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), pp.275-302

[5]One arena of this particular tradition of negotiation, challenge, and improvisation is the controversy and debates surrounding Chutney (a form of music and dance whose roots are clearly located in North Indian, especially Bihari folk music tradition) performances of women in public spaces.

APPENDIX A

STATISTICAL TABLES RELATED TO GENDER AND SUGAR ECONOMY UNDER INDENTURESHIP

Table 1: Caste And Religious Backgrounds of Female Emigrants To Trinidad (1876-1892 /1908-1917)

Year	Brahmins	Agricul-turists	Artizans	Low Castes	Muslim	Christ-ian	Total
1876-77	70	158	56	168	89	--	541
1877-78	92	153	36	292	111	--	684
1878-79	60	243	14	411	79	--	807
1879-80*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1880-81	118	276	43	338	246	1	1,022
1881-82	121	163	23	284	180	--	771
1882-83	118	128	20	161	160	2	589
1883-84	179	170	25	267	180	--	821
1884-85	54	150	90	308	138	--	740
1886	108	106	103	239	140	--	696
1887	120	101	93	252	112	--	678
1888	103	160	33	340	99	--	735
1889	97	210	65	436	119	1	928
1890	19	291	58	568	165	5	1,178
1891	90	320	46	616	105	1	1.178
1892	90	281	53	414	86	1	925
Total	**1,439**	**2,910**	**758**	**5,094**	**2,009**	**11**	**12,293**
1908	52	182	47	355	80	1	717
1909	62	181	50	340	105	2	740
1910	98	143	35	197	120	1	594
1911	129	214	27	199	95	2	666
1912	166	212	24	226	175	--	803
1913	56	115	6	129	58	--	364
1914	16	35	7	60	19	--	137
1915	23	76	5	80	50	--	234
1916*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1917	16	44	4	57	12	--	133
Total	**618**	**1,021**	**205**	**1,444**	**714**	**6**	**4,388**

* returns not available for these years

Source: Compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration From the Port of Calcutta To British and Foreign Colonies, (1876-1892 / 1908-1917)

Table 2: Caste and Religious Backgrounds of Female Emigrants to Guyana (1876-1892 / 1908-1917)

Year	Brahmins	Agricul-turists	Artizans	Low Castes	Muslims	Christ-ians	Total
1876-77	189	269	103	391	293	4	1,249
1877-78	249	545	83	1,617	346	-----	2,840
1878-79	191	664	111	687	388	-----	2,041
1880-81	184	291	57	428	350	1	1,311
1881-82	152	223	38	295	244	-----	952
1882-83	186	196	24	293	195	9	903
1883-84	130	147	47	305	190	-----	819
1884-85	263	293	256	766	285	1	1,864
1886	125	115	213	275	161	----	889
1887	221	144	233	354	234	1	1,187
1888	183	256	89	446	160	----	1,134
1889	121	271	79	458	148	------	1,077
1890	77	454	78	640	197	20	1,466
1891	28	493	66	971	174	-----	1,932
1892	76	585	110	553	185	----	1,509
Total	**2,375**	**4,946**	**1,587**	**8,479**	**3,550**	**46**	**21,173**
1908	32	155	28	275	56	----	546
1909	86	198	71	232	154	----	741
1910	54	108	43	130	118	------	453
1911	107	226	17	167	136	1	654
1912	165	184	13	204	157	1	724
1913	65	103	16	112	87	-----	383
1914	22	34	3	37	25	------	121
1915	31	30	5	47	36	------	149
1916*	-----	-----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1917	2	14	-----	20	7	-----	43
Total	**564**	**1,052**	**196**	**1,224**	**776**	**2**	**3814**

* returns not available for these years

Source: Compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration From the Port of Calcutta To British and Foreign Colonies, (1876-1892 / 1908-1917)

Table 3: Percentage of Married to Unmarried Women Emigrants to Trinidad and Guyana (1881-1892)

Year	Trinidad			Guyana		
	Total No. of Women	Women with Husbands	% of Married Women	Total No. of Women	Women with Husbands	% Of Married Women
1881-1882	658	134	25.6%	816	197	31.8%
1882-1883	508	94	22.7%	684	181	36.0%
1883-1884	684	181	36.0%	697	189	37.2%
1884-1885	553	191	52.8%	1,480	299	25.3%
1885	405	302	25.4%	1,015	593	41.6%
1886	543	345	33.5%	724	483	33.3%
1887*	--	--	--	--	--	--
1888	550	227	70.3%	889	328	33.3%
1889	692	301	77.0%	836	330	58.5%
1890	878	383	77.4%	1,167	334	40.1%
1891	884	416	88.9%	1,547	539	53.5%
1892	771	280	57.02%	1,230	363	41.9%

* returns not available for these years

Source: Compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration From the Port of Calcutta To British and Foreign Colonies,

Table 4: Proportion of Women to Men Emigrants to Trinidad and Guyana (1876-1917)

Year	Trinidad			Guyana		
	Men	Women	Proportion	Men	Women	Proportion
1876-77	993	471	46.4	2,470	1,063	43.0
1877-78	1,284	546	42.5	4,403	1,994	45.3
1878-79	1,611	649	40.3	3,957	1,668	42.2
1879-80*	2,771*	1,178*	42.5	3,558*	1,507*	42.4
1880-81	2,067	880	42.6	2,847	1,140	40.0
1881-82	1,643	658	40.0	2,040	816	40.0
1882-83	1,256	508	40.4	1,904	761	40.0
1883-84	1,687	684	40.5	1,742	697	40.0
1884-85	1,242	553	44.5	3,514	1,480	42.1
1885	996	405	40.7	2,165	1,015	46.9
1886	1,349	543	40.3	1,760	724	41.1
1887*	1,852*	836*	45.1	3,130*	2,491*	79.6
1888	1,299	550	42.3	2,157	889	41.2
1889	1,675	692	41.3	2,071	836	40.4
1890	1,917	878	45.8	2,879	1,167	40.5
1891	1,811	884	48.8	3,325	1,547	46.5
1892	1,480	771	52.1	2,923	1,230	42.1
1908	1,730	717	41.4	1,251	546	43.6
1909	1,740	740	42.4	1,774	741	41.8
1910	1,412	594	42.1	1,163	453	39.0
1911	1,576	666	42.3	1,466	654	44.6
1912	1,834	803	43.8	1,668	724	43.4
1913	872	364	41.7	893	383	42.9
1914	286	137	47.9	373	121	32.4
1915	389	234	60.1	272	149	54.8
1916	830	447	53.9	736	354	48.1
1917	293	133	45.4	85	43	50.6

* Compiled from mortality tables, as figures of proportion were not available for these years. This does not account for desertions etc that took place in depots before embarkation on ships.

Source: Compiled from yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration From the Port of Calcutta To British and Foreign Colonies,

Table 5: Mortality in Emigration Depot of Trinidad at the Port of Calcutta (1878-1892)

Year	No./Sex of Emigrants Accommodated in the Calcutta Depot					
	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	Infants	Total
1878-79	1,892	740	191	143	127	3,093
1879-80	-------	-------	--------	--------	---------	----------
	--	--	--	--	--	
1880-81	2,491	1,014	237	127	113	3,982
1881-82	1,902	748	154	84	102	2,990
1882-83	1,566	595	100	60	81	2,402
1883-84	2,106	791	123	97	107	3,224
1884-85	1,927	829	249	195	177	3,377
1885	1,351	542	144	85	143	2,265
1886	1,611	638	172	151	92	2,664
1887	1,607	636	212	162	94	2,711
1888	1,731	711	276	209	118	3,045
1889	2,069	870	330	243	190	3,702
1890	2,276	1,059	457	344	195	4,331
1891	2,194	1,134	412	325	282	4,297
1892	1,783	885	215	125	154	3,162

Year	Mortality According to Sex and Age						
	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	Boys Infants	Girls Infants	Total
1878-79	2	1	1	3	3	1	11
1879-80	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1880-81	15	7	2	1	1	7	33
1881-82	3	3	--	2	2	3	13
1882-83	11	8	--	1	--	2	22
1883-84	6	3	--	--	4	--	13
1884-85	18	12	13	8	12	10	73
1885	2	2	1	--	4	2	11
1886	1	1	--	1	--	--	3
1887	9	1	7	3	2	1	23
1888	4	6	--	4	3	3	20
1889	1	1	2	--	5	4	13
1890	2	2	1	5	4	6	20
1891	4	3	--	--	4	4	15
1892	--	--	--	--	2	--	2

Source: Compiled from the yearly statistical tables in The Annual Reports on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies (1878-1892)

Table 6: Mortality in Emigration Depot of Guyana at the Port of Calcutta (1878-1892)

Year	No./Sex of Emigrants Accommodated in the Calcutta Depot					
	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	Infants	Total
1878-79	4,365	1,825	455	291	327	7,203
1879-80	---	---	---	-	--	
1880-81	3,277	1,321	244	157	86	5,085
1881-82	2,362	919	161	105	95	3,642
1882-83	2,295	858	142	103	115	3,513
1883-84	2,148	805	145	82	116	3,296
1884-85	4,431	1,826	424	347	348	7,376
1885	3,023	1,338	315	227	247	5,150
1886	2,358	890	239	185	155	3,827
1887	2,725	1,094	349	237	148	4,553
1888	2,434	965	323	250	163	4,135
1889	2,387	1,105	362	274	180	4,261
1890	3,730	1,648	560	438	276	6,652
1891	4,046	1,844	548	374	299	7,111
1892	3,282	1,378	325	273	174	5,432

Mortality According to Age and Sex

Year	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	Boys Infants	Girls Infants	Total
1878-79	7	2	6	5	9	6	34
1879-80	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1880-81	9	4	2	1	1	3	20
1881-82	9	3	2	2	1	--	17
1882-83	8	3	--	1	--	2	14
1883-84	7	4	--	1	2	4	18
1884-85	14	7	2	3	6	7	39
1885	30	12	7	3	3	3	58
1886	3	3	2	1	1	1	11
1887	4	6	4	5	4	3	26
1888	3	4	--	4	5	5	21
1889	4	3	12	8	6	11	44
1890	12	12	15	10	10	6	65
1891	13	10	15	14	11	6	69
1892	2	1	--	1	2	2	8

Source: Compiled from the statistical tables in The Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies (1878-1892)

Table 7: Percentage Rate of Mortality in Trinidadian and Guyanese Depots at Calcutta - An Age and Sex Comparative (1878-1892)

Guyana

Year	Male	Female	Children	Infants	Total
1878-79	0.16%	0.11%	1.47%	4.59%	0.47%
1879-80	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------
1880-81	0.27%	0.30%	0.75%	4.65%	0.39%
1881-82	0.38%	0.33%	1.50%	1.05%	0.47%
1882-83	0.35%	0.35%	0.41%	1.74%	0.39%
1883-84	0.33%	0.49%	0.44%	5.17%	0.55%
1884-85	0.32%	0.38%	0.65%	3.74%	0.53%
1885	0.99%	0.89%	1.85%	2.43%	1.13%
1886	0.13%	0.34%	0.71%	1.29%	0.29%
1887	0.15%	0.55%	1.53%	4.73%	0.57%
1888	0.12%	0.41%	0.69%	6.13%	0.51%
1889	0.17%	0.27%	3.14%	9.44%	1.03%
1890	0.32%	0.73%	2.51%	5.79%	0.98%
1891	0.32%	0.54%	3.15%	5.69%	0.97%
1892	0.06%	0.07%	0.17%	2.29%	0.15%

Trinidad

Year	Male	Female	Children	Infants	Total
1878-79	0.11%	0.14%	1.98%	3.15%	0.36%
1879-80	--------	---------	---------	---------	---------
1880-81	0.60%	0.69%	0.82%	7.08%	0.83%
1881-82	0.16%	0.40%	0.84%	4.9%	0.43%
1882-83	0.70%	1.34%	0.62%	2.47%	0.91%
1883-84	0.28%	0.38%	0%	3.74%	0.40%
1884-85	0.93%	1.45%	4.73%	12.43%	2.16%
1885	0.16%	0.37%	0.44%	4.19%	0.49%
1886	0.06%	0.16%	0.31%	0%	0.11%
1887	0.56%	0.16%	2.67%	3.19%	0.85%
1888	0.23%	0.84%	0.82%	5.08%	0.66%
1889	0.05%	0.11%	0.35%	4.74%	0.35%
1890	0.09%	0.19%	0.75%	5.13%	0.46%
1891	0.18%	0.26%	0%	3.45%	0.35%
1892	0%	0%	0%	1.29%	0.06%

Source: Calculated from mortality figures for Trinidad and Guyana in The Annual Emigration Report from the Port of Calcutta to the British and Foreign Colonies (1878-1892)

Table 8: Total Mortality Figures According to Age and Sex in Emigration Depots of Guyana and Trinidad (1870-1892)

Sex/Age	Guyana			Trinidad		
	Total in Depot	Total Deaths	% Rate	Total in Depot	Total Deaths	% Rate
Male	42,836	125	0.29%	26,506	78	0.29%
Female	17,816	74	0.42%	11,192	50	0.45%
Children (Boys)	4,592	67	1.46%	3,372	27	0.83%
Children (Girls)	3,343	59	1.76%	2,350	28	1.19%
Infants	2,729	120	4.40%	1,925	89	4.62%
Total	**71,236**	**444**	**0.62%**	**45,245**	**272**	**0.60%**

Source: Calculated from figures in the Annual Emigration Reports from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies (1870-1892)

Table 9: Mortality on Ships from Calcutta to The West Indies in 1856-57

Name of Ship	Adult Males	Adult Females	Boys	Girls	Infants	Total	Deaths	% of Mortality
Wellesley	254	84	13	11	20	382	22	5.75%
Bucephalus Robert	252	84	20	9	15	380	45	11.84%
Seppings Roman	197	59	13	13	9	291	61	20.96%
Emperor	207	68	14	12	12	313	88	28.11%
Adelaide George	213	62	10	8	11	304	25	8.22%
Seymour	238	75	21	5	15	354	36	10.17%
Eveline	231	96	20	17	23	387	72	18.60%
Maidstone	268	68	18	10	11	375	92	24.53
Merchantman	239	96	18	12	20	385	120	31.17%
Granville	154	100	25	14	16	309	37	11.97%
Burmah	230	58	10	10	18	326	49	15.03%
Scindian	156	81	21	14	16	288	60	20.83%
Total	**2,639**	**931**	**203**	**135**	**186**	**4,094**	**707**	**17.27%**

Source: British Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons), Vol. XLVII, Paper No.314, 1874. Note on Emigration from India by J. Geoghehan (Under Secretary to the Government of India, Dept. of Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce) (Henceforth The Geoghehan Report)

Table 10: Total Mortality Aboard ships - Comparative Figures for Trinidad and Guyana

Figures for the Period Between 1859 and 1870

	Total Embarked	No. of Deaths	% Mortality
Guyana	47,247	2,932	6.20%
Trinidad	23,719	998	4.20%

Figures for the Period Between 1877 and 1889

Guyana	44,053	734	1.66%
Trinidad	22,569	429	1.90%

Source: For 1859 to 1870, compiled from The Geoghehan Report, 1874. For 1877 to 1889, compiled from The Annual Emigration Reports from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies.

Table 11: Mortality Rates Aboard Ships Traveling to Guyana (1859-1870; 1877-1889)

Guyana

Year	Total Embarked	Deaths on Voyage	Rate of Mortality
1859	4,594	618	13.4%
1860	4,288	158	3.7%
1861	4,366	202	4.6%
1862	2,967	91	3.06%
1863	2,643	88	3.3%
1864	3,139	788	25.1%
1865	2,842	188	6.6%
1866	4,509	173	3.8%
1867	3,001	101	3.3%
1868	5,014	167	3.3%
1869	6,685	310	4.6%
1870	3,199	48	1.2%
1877-78	8,288	109	1.3%
1878-79	6,520	150	2.30%
1879-80	--	--	--
1880-81	4,416	61	1.38%
1881-82	3,168	60	1.89%
1882-83	2,984	28	0.93%
1883-84	2,731	36	1.31%
1884-85	5,827	157	2.69
1885	--	--	--
1886	2,857	31	1.08%
1887	3,836	53	1.38%
1888	--	--	--
1889	3,426	49	1.43%

Source: Calculated from The Geoghehan Report for the period 1859 to 1870, and from The Annual Emigration Report from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies

Table 12: Mortality Rates Aboard Ships Traveling to Trinidad (1859-70; 1877-89)

	Trinidad		
Year	Total Embarked	Deaths on Voyage	Rate of Mortality
1859	1,736	166	9.4%
1860	2,080	144	6.9%
1861	2,030	71	3.5%
1862	1,389	39	2.8%
1863	1,433	46	3.2%
1864	1,450	43	2.9%
1865	1,498	162	10.8%
1866	2,993	123	4.1%
1867	1840	49	2.6%
1868	2,248	59	2.6%
1869	2,935	52	1.7%
1870	2,087	44	2.1%
1877-78	2151	73	3.39%
1878-79	2,632	38	1.44%
1879-80	-------	-----	-------
1880-81	3,342	58	1.73%
1881-82	2,591	46	1.77%
1882-83	1,963	33	1.68%
1883-84	2,661	27	1.01%
1884-85	2,131	55	2.58%
1885	--------	------	--------
1886	2,201	21	0.95%
1887	2,130	27	1.26%
1888	--------	------	-------
1889	2,897	78	2.69%

Source: Calculated from The Geoghehan Report for the period 1859 to 1870, and from The Annual Emigration Report from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies

Table 13: No. of Births and Newborn Deaths at Sea for Guyana (1871-1890)

Year	Total Embarked	Births At Sea	Deaths at Sea	Landed	% of Births to Immigrants Embarked
1871	2,735	15	3	12	0.55%
1872	3,692	38	9	29	0.78%
1873	7,904	53	12	41	0.67%
1874	6,180	52	19	33	0.84%
1875	4,365	28	2	26	0.64%
1876	2,932	31	2	29	1.06%
1877	3,905	41	12	29	1.05%
1878	9,329	82	20	62	0.88%
1879	6,124	24	5	19	0.39%
1880	4,403	37	7	30	0.84%
1881	4,022	44	12	32	0.80%
1882	3,186	26	7	19	0.82%
1883	2,494	20	4	16	0.80%
1884	4,753	50	10	40	1.05%
1885	6,676	58	16	48	0.87%
1886	3,601	27	7	20	0.75%
1887	4,420	42	17	25	0.95%
1888	2,936	26	6	20	0.89%
1889	3,574	27	6	37	0.93%
1890	4,641	43	6	37	0.93%

Source: D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration from India to British Guiana. (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893) p.18

Table 14: Indian Agricultural Workers in Guyana - A Sex Comparative 1891.

Workers	Demerara	Essequibo	Berbice	Total
Males	29,967	11,384	10,017	51,368
Females	18,463	6,243	6,128	30,834
Total	**48,430**	**17,627**	**16,145**	**82,202**

Source: Census of British Guiana, 1891

Table 15: Indian Agricultural Workers in Trinidad - A Sex Comparative (1891 and 1911)

Year	Males in Agriculture	Females in Agriculture	Total Indians in Agriculture	Male Agricultural Laborers	Female Agricultural Laborers	Total Indian Laborers
1891	26,771	14,131	40,902	25,645	13,944	39,589
1911	26,341	11,926	38,267	23,606	11,272	34,878

Source: Census of Trinidad and Tobago, 1891 and 1911. Figures are not inclusive of Trinidad born Indians.

Table 16: Indian Indentured and Non-Indentured Resident Labor on Estates in Guyana (1851- 1918)

Year	Indentured Adult Labor	Unindentured Labor	Total in Colony
1851	--	--	7,682*
1866	25,452	3,038	--
1871	33,142	7,262	48,363*
1876	26,826	23,587	68,689
1881	22,879	41,890	87,988 79,929*
1886	17,144	51,615	100,281
1891	16,710	56,086	108,484 105,463*
1896	17,887	51,627	116,770
1901	14,609	58,083	130,341
1906	9,867	51,155	133,665
1911	9,141	54,804	126,517*
1916	6,731	58,745	137,944

Source: K.O. Lawrence, A Question of Labour, Appendix II, p. 525 ; * Census Figures

Table 17: Indentured and Unindentured Indian Labor on Sugar Estates of Trinidad - A Sex Comparative

Year	Indentured		Unindentured Resident	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1854	3,902	675		
1862	7,131	2,498	1,308	430
1863	7,593	2,479	1,481	565
1864	7,445	2,342	1,577	603
1865	7,374	2,125	1,727	756
1866	8,905	2,002	2,136	899
1867	7,132	2,358	2,022	825
1868	6,995	2,448	2,205	842
1869	7,514	2,697	2,332	946
1870	7,207	3,040	2,755	1,201
1871	7,437	3,179	3,017	1,254
1872	7,644	3,353	3,399	1,400
1873	7,838	3,345	3,715	1,579
1874	7,770	3,340	3,743	1,630
1875	7,652	3,120	3,767	1,778
1876	7,152	2,905	4,057	1,858
1877	6,675	2,184	4,310	2,027
1878	6,281	2,566	4,279	2,095
1879	6,639	2,612	3,861	2,116
1890	7,252	2,708	5,160	2,718
1910	8,246	3,305	6,953	3,657

Sources: C.O. 295/187, 1855; C.O. 384/118, 1878; C.O. 384/124, 1879; C.O. 384/129, 1880; C.O. 384/109, 1876. Also Walton Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p.281.

Table 18: Proportion of Indentured and Unindentured Indian Workers Resident On Sugar Estates in Trinidad (1863-1875)

Year	Indentured (%)	Unindentured (%)
1863	83.12	16.88
1864	81.78	18.22
1865	79.28	20.72
1866	76.73	23.27
1867	76.92	23.08
1868	75.61	24.39
1869	75.70	24.30
1870	72.15	27.85
1871	71.31	28.69
1872	69.62	30.38
1873	67.87	32.13
1874	67.40	32.60
1875	66.02	33.98

Source: Calculated from Labor Abstracts in C.O. 384/109, 1876

Table 19: Proportion of Male/ Female Workers (Indentured and Free) on Sugar Estates of Trinidad (1863-1875)

Year	Indentured Males (%)	Indentured Females (%)	Free Males (%)	Free Females (%)	Total Males (%)	Total Females (%)
1863	62.7	20.5	12.2	4.7	74.9	25.1
1864	62.3	19.6	13.2	5.0	75.4	24.6
1865	61.5	17.7	14.4	6.3	76.0	24.0
1866	61.4	15.4	16.4	6.9	77.8	22.2
1867	57.8	19.1	16.4	6.7	74.2	25.8
1868	56.0	19.6	17.6	6.7	73.6	26.4
1869	55.7	20.0	17.3	7.0	73.0	27.0
1870	50.7	21.4	19.4	8.5	70.1	29.9
1871	50.0	21.4	20.3	8.4	70.2	29.8
1872	48.4	21.2	21.5	8.9	69.9	30.1
1873	47.6	20.3	22.5	9.6	70.1	29.9
1874	47.1	20.3	22.7	9.9	69.9	30.2
1875	46.9	19.1	23.1	10.9	70.0	30.0

Source: Calculated from Labor Abstract in C.O. 384/109, 1876.
Note: Percentage rate is calculated from only Indian labor resident on estates and does not take into account any other ethnic groups of workers present on estates.

Table 20: Area Under Sugar Cane Cultivation in Guyana (1841-1918)

Year	Total Area Under Cultivation (Acres)	Area Under Cane Cultivation (Acres)
1841	N/A	24,850
1851	N/A	31,354
1861	N/A	52,726
1871	N/A	75,944
1881	142,635	77,379
1891	169,920	78,307
1901	157,644	67,884
1908	147,967	74,860
1913	152,072	72,685
1918	197,887	73,565

Source: Dwarka Nath, A History of Indians in Guyana, p, 249.

Table 21: Area Under Sugar Cane Cultivation in Trinidad (1845-1921)

Year	Total Area Under Cultivation (Acres)	Area Under Cane Cultivation (Acres)
1845	54,413	28,507
1855	52,807	29,059
1861-62	68,592	36,739
1871	83,841	47,319
1881	98,171	52,163
1891	194,000	58,500
1901	318,000	52,000
1911	423,600	62,600
1921	670.188	43,265

Source: Walton Look Lai, Indentured Labor, p. 275.

Table 22: Quantity Of Sugar Exported (Not inclusive of its By-products) from Trinidad (1862-1910)

Year	Sugar Exported	Year	Sugar Exported
1862	41,232 Hogshead	1889	66,762 Hogshead
1863	37,394 Hogshead	1890	68,516 Hogshead
1864	39,619 Hogshead	1891	61,006 Hogshead
1865	30,888 Hogshead	1892	65,234 Hogshead
1866	44,458 Hogshead	1893	61,080 Hogshead
1867	46,160 Hogshead	1894	65,553 Hogshead
1868	46,826 Hogshead	1901-02	45,254 Tons
1869	50,984 Hogshead	1902-03	47,259 Tons
1870	41,788 Hogshead	1903-04	40,384 Tons
1871	56,308 Hogshead	1904-05	47,578 Tons
1872	44,288 Hogshead	1905-06	36,241 Tons
1873	49,766 Hogshead	1906-07	45,004 Tons
1874	41,806 Hogshead	1907-08	46,270 Tons
1875	129,801172 Lbs.	1910	924,953 Cwt.
1876	114,921284 Lbs.		

Sources: The Trinidad Official and Commercial Register and Almanac (1873-79), p.95; p.104; C.O. 295/366, 1895 (Vol.6); Trinidad and Tobago Blue Book (1905-06); Notes on Trinidad and Tobago, Department of Agriculture (Port-Of-Spain, Trinidad, 1912).

Table 23: Value of Sugar Exports from Guyana (1866-1917)

Year	Sugar and its by-products (in $)	Year	Sugar and its by-products (in $)
1866	9,783	1907-08	5,407
1870	10,560	1908-09	1,776
1875	10,066	1009-10	6,587
1880	11,210	1910-11	5,593
1885	7,801	1911-12	7,266
1890	8,337	1913	6,410
1894-95	6,554	1914	8,742
1899-1900	6,385	1915	12,124
1905-06	6,627	1916	13,115
1906-07	5,854	1917	14,783

Source: Dwarka Nath, A History of Indians in Guyana, p.263.

Table 24 Number of Authorized Marriages in Guyana (1912-1921)

Year	Registered on Arrival (Sec.141)	By Magistrate (Sec.146)	By Clergy (Sec. 150)	By Own Priest (Sec. 151)	Total
1912-13	163	162	100	6	431
1913-14	95	142	104	18	359
1914-15	75	125	108	19	327
1915 (9 months)	109	88	104	9	310
1916	94	108	144	16	362
1917	81	139	141	12	373
1918	---	153	184	28	365
1919	---	225	166	50	441
1920	---	193	181	47	421
1921	---	177	137	24	338
Total	**617**	**1,512**	**1,369**	**229**	**3,727**

Source: The Tivary, Pillai and Keating Report, p.132

APPENDIX B
CONTRACT OF INDENTURE

COLONIAL EMIGRATION, FORM No. 5
Form of Agreement for Intending Emigrants.

Particulars of emigrant executing a contract for service in the Colony of Trinidad.

Registration Date	Registration No.	Emigrants Name	Emigrants Father's Name	Dependants Name	Dependants Relation	Sex	Age	Caste	Occupation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
'89	1539	Budhoo	Emam Buckus	--	--	M	22	Musalman	laborer

Residence			Successors to Estate in India	
District	Thana	Village Town or Mohalla	Name	Father's Name	Relation
11	12	13	14	15	16
Agra	Moti Kuchra	Moti Kuchra	Emam Buckus	Unknown	--

I agree to emigrate on the conditions of service specified on the reverse.
Executed in my presence.

His x mark,
Emigrant.

F.E. Taylor,
Registering Officer.

Dated at Benares, the 21st. October, 1889.

N.B.- This form is to be filled up in the Office of the Registering officer in English in triplicate.

Fit.
M.L. Hooper,
Civil Surgeon of Benares.

The 21st. October 1889.

TRINIDAD.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT WHICH RECRUITERS FOR THE COLONY OF TRINIDAD ARE AUTHORIZED TO OFFER TO INTENDING EMIGRANTS.

Period of Service.-Five Years from date of arrival in the Colony.

Nature of Labour.-The cultivation of the soil on sugar, cocoa, and other plantation and all work connected with the manufacture of the products of such plantation.

Number of days on which an emigrant is required to labour in each week.-Five days, except during the gathering in of the crop, when he will be required to work six days, Sundays and authorized holidays excepted.

Number of hours in each day during which an emigrant is required to work without extra remuneration.-Nine, inclusive of half-an-hour for rest and refreshment.

Monthly or daily wages or task work rates.-The daily wages for adults over 10 years of age (for 9 hours work) is one shilling and a half penny, which is equal to 10 annas and 11 and 1/2 pie, payable fortnightly. Task or ticca work, is however usually preferred by both emigrant and employer, and the payment for such work is regulated by the wages paid to unidentured labourers resident on the same plantation, or should there, in the opinion of the Protector of Immigrants, not be a sufficient number of unindentured labourers to form a standard, then the indentured immigrant is paid at the same rate as unindentured labourers on plantations in the neighbourhood, such rate being not less than the minimum rate paid for time work.

Conditions as to return Passage.-An emigrant on completing a continuous residence of ten years in the colony, five having been passed under indenture, will be entitled, together with his family, to a return passage to Calcutta, at the expense of the Trinidad Government, but this arrangement does not preclude an emigrant returning to Calcutta at his own expense after completing five years of industrial residence on a plantation.

Other Conditions.-rations will be provided to all emigrants during their first year under indenture, the cost of such rations (four pence = 3 1/2 annas) being deducted from their wages. Children between the ages of five and ten will be provided with half rations free of charge.

Suitable dwellings will be assigned to emigrants free of rent, and such dwellings will be kept by the employer in good repair.

Hospital accommodation with medical attendance, comforts, &c., will be provided free of charge to all emigrants under indenture and their families.

(Sic., Followed by Translations in Hindi and Urdu Scripts)

I agree to accept the person named on the face of this form as an emigrant on the above conditions.

In presence

His x mark,

Narain,
Recruiter for Trinidad.

F.E. Taylor,
Registering Officer.

Dated at Benares, the 21st October1889.

O.W. Warner,
Emigration Agent for Trinidad.

J. Grant,
Protector of Emigrants.

Source: D.W.D. Comins, Note on Emigration from India to Trinidad. Appendix J. Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1893. pp. lxxxi-lxxxii.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

Public (Government) Documents

United Kingdom Government

Colonial Office Records, Public Record Office, London:

C.O. 295 Series. Original Correspondence (Trinidad), 1838-1920.

C.O. 318 Series. Original Correspondence (West Indies), 1840-1917.

C.O. 384 Series. Despatches - Emigration (West Indies), 1860-1910.

British Parliamentary Papers (annual series):

1839, XXXIX (463). British Guiana - Correspondence regarding Hill Coolies.

1840, XXXIV (77). British Guiana - Correspondence regarding Hill Coolies.

1841, III (C.346). Coolies in British Guiana: Report.

1841, XVI (45). Exportation of Hill Coolies: Report of Committee and Correspondences.

1841, XVI (427). Hill Coolies: Papers in Continuation of House of Commons Paper 45.

1856, XX (C.2395). Sixteenth General Report of the Emigration Commissioners (West Indies).

1856, XXIV (C.2089). Report of the Emigration Commissioners: Return of Ships and Coolies entitled to Return Passages to the East Indies from 1850.

1871, XX (C.393). Report of the Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in British Guiana.

1874, XLVII (314). Report by J. Geoghehan on Emigration from India.

1898, L (C.8655-57). Report and Papers of the Royal Commission on the West Indian Sugar Industry (Norman Commission).

1910, XXVII (Cd. 5192-94). Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates (Sanderson Commission).

1915, XXVII (Cd. 7744). Report on the Condition of Indian Immigrants in the Four British Colonies (Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, and Fiji), and in the Dutch Colony of Surinam (McNeill-Lal Report).

1922, XVI (Cmd. 1679). Report by the Hon. E.F.L. Wood on his visit to the West Indies and British Guiana, 1921-22.

Government of India Publications

Annual Reports on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies (1876-1921). Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1877 onwards.

Comins, D.W.D. Note on the Abolition of Return Passage of Indian Migrants from Trinidad and Demerara. Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1893.

_____. Note on Emigration from India to Trinidad. Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1893.

_____. Note on Emigration from India to British Guiana. Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1893.

Pillai, P. Kesava, V.N. Tivary and G. F. Keatinge. Reports on the Scheme for Indian Emigration to British Guiana.Part I and II. Government of India Press, 1924.

Pitcher, Duncan. Diary of a Tour in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh while on Special Duty in connection with Emigration to the Colonies from British India. Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1882.

The Indian Emigration Act XXI of 1883 as modified upto 5th. March, 1897. (Rules and Notification). Revised Edition, Calcutta, 1898.

Tyson, J.D. Report on the Condition of Indians in Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad: Memorandum of Evidence for the Royal Commission to the West Indies presented on behalf of the Government of India. New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1939.

Governments of the West Indies

The British Guiana Handbook, 1913

The British Guiana Handbook, 1922

Census of British Guiana, 1891.

Decennial Census Reports of Trinidad and Tobago, 1891-1921

Notes on Trinidad and Tobago, Department of Agriculture. 1912.

Trinidad and Tobago Blue Books of Statistics (1905-1908).

The Trinidad Official and Commercial Register and Almanac (1873-1879).

West Indian Census, 1946.

Newspapers and Journals

The Daily Chronicle (Georgetown, Guyana)

The Demerara Daily Chronicle

The Indian Emigrant

The Journal of the Board of Agriculture of British Guiana, (1907-1910).

The Port-Of-Spain Gazette

San Fernando Gazette

The Star of the West - A Popular Journal of Politics, Commerce, Literature and Arts (Port-Of-Spain, Trinidad)

Timehri being the Journal of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society of British Guiana.

Trinidad Chronicle

Trinidad Guardian

Oral Sources

Mahabir, Noor Kumar. The Still Cry - Personal Accounts of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago during Indentureship (1845-1917). Tacarigua, Trinidad and Ithaca, New York: Calaloux Publications, 1985.

Interviews Conducted by Patricia Mohammed between 1988 and 1991 lodged at the University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. UWI Oral History Project (OPREP/OP-62), nos. 1,3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 19, 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45.

Interview of Mrs. P. Armoogam conducted by author and Ms. S. Raman in Tunapuna, Trinidad, 1995. Tapes 1 and 2.

Contemporary Publications

Amphlett, John. Under a Tropical Sky: A Journal of First Impressions of the West Indies. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873.

Aspinall, Algernon E. The British West Indies. London, Bath, and New York: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1912. Reprint, 1913.

Bell, K.N., and W. P. Morrell, eds. Select Documents on British Colonial Policy, 1830-1860. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928.

Brierly, J. N. Trinidad: Then and Now. Port-of-Spain: Franklin's Electric Printery, 1912.

Bronkhurst, H.V.P. The Colony of British Guiana and its Laboring Population. London: T. Woolmer, 1883.

_____. Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guiana. London: T. Woolmer, 1888.

Collens, J. H. A Guide to Trinidad: A Handbook for the Use of Tourists and Visitors. 2d. ed. London: Elliot Stock, 1888.

Davy, John. The West Indies before and since Slave Emancipation. London: W. & F. G. Cash, 1854. Reprint, London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1971.

Day, Charles William. Five Years' Residence in the West Indies. 2 Vols. London: Colburn & Co., 1852.

Des Voeux, George W. Experiences of a Demerara Magistrate, 1863-1869. Georgetown: Daily Chronicle, 1948.

De Verteuil, L. A. A. Trinidad: Its Geography, Natural Resources, Administration, Present Condition and Prospects. 2d. ed. London, Paris, and New York: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1884.

Froude, J. A. The English in the West Indies or the Bow of Ulysses. London: Longman's, 1888.

Gamble, W. H. Trinidad, Historical and Descriptive: Being a Narrative of Nine Years' Residence in the Island. London: Yates and Alexander, 1866.

Grant, K. J. My Missionary Memories. Nova Scotia:Imperial Publishing Co., 1923.

Kirke, Henry. Twenty-Five Years in British Guiana, 1872-1897. Reprint of 1898 ed. Westport, Connecticut: Negro Universities Press, 1970.

Marrat, Jabez. In the Tropics; or Scenes and Incidents of West Indian Life. 2d. ed. London: T. Woolmer, 1884.

Morton, Sarah E., ed. John Morton of Trinidad: Journals, Letters and Papers. Toronto: Westminster Co., 1916.

Premium, Barton. Eight Years in British Guiana, 1840-1848. London: Longman's, 1850.

Rodney, Walter, ed. Guyanese Sugar Plantations in the Late Nineteenth Century: A Contemporary Description from the ARGOSY. Georgetown: Bovell, 1979.

Scoble, John. Hill Coolies: A Brief Exposure of the Deplorable Conditions of the Hill Coolies in British Guiana and Mauritius. London: Harvey and Danton, 1840.

Sewell, William G. The Ordeal of Free Labor in the British West Indies. New York: Harper and Bros., 1861.

Swinton, Captain and Mrs. Jane. Journal of a Voyage with Coolie Emigrants from Calcutta to Trinidad. London: Alfred Bennett, 1859.

Trollope, Anthony. The West Indies and the Spanish Main. London: Chapman and Hall, 1860.

Wenkstern, Otto, ed. Letters on Coolie Emigration to the West Indies. London: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, 1859.

B.Secondary Sources

Books

Abel, Elizabeth and Emily K. Abel, eds. The Signs Reader - Women, Gender and Scholarship. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1983.

Adamson, Alan H. Sugar without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. Revised Edition, London and New York: Verso, 1991.

Anzaldua, Gloria. Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Foundation, 1987.

Beachey, R. W. The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the late Nineteenth Century. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957.

Beckles, Hilary. Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1989.

Behar, Ruth. Translated Woman - Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Birbalsingh, Frank, ed. Indenture and Exile: The Indo-Caribbean Experience. Toronto, 1989.

Bolland, O. Nigel. The Formation of a Colonial Society: Belize from Conquest to Crown Colony. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Borthwick, Meredith. The Changing Role of Women in Bengal (1849-1905). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Brereton, Bridget. Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad (1870-1900). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Brereton, Bridget, and Winston Dookeran, eds. East Indians in the Caribbean: Colonialism and the Struggle for Identity. New York: Kraus, 1982.

Bush, Barbara. Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. London: James Currey Ltd., 1990.

Carroll, Berenice A., ed. Liberating Women's History - Theoretical and Critical Essays. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.

Chatterjee, Partha. Nation and its Fragments. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and Sociology of Gender. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Chowdhry, Prem. The Veiled Women: shifting gender equations in rural Haryana, 1880-1990. Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Clark, Alice W. ed. Gender and Political Economy - Explorations of South Asian Systems. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Craig, Susan. Contemporary Caribbean - A sociological Reader. Vol.I. Maracas, Trinidad and Tobago: By Author, 1981.

Cross, Malcolm and Arnaud Marks, eds. Peasants, Plantations and Rural Communities in the Caribbean. Surrey, England and Leiden, Netherlands: Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, and Department of Caribbean Studies of the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 1979.

Cross, Malcolm and Gad Heuman, eds. Labor in the Caribbean - From Emancipation to Independence. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1988.

Curtin, Philip D. Two Jamaicas - The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony 1830-1860. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955. Reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968.

Dabydeen, David and Brinsley Samaroo, eds. India in the Caribbean. London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1987.

_____. eds. Across the Dark Waters - Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Limited, 1996.

De Lauretis, Teresa, ed. Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Deen, Shamshu. Solving East Indian Roots in Trinidad. Freeport, Trinidad: By Author, 1994.

Deerr, Noel. The History of Sugar. 2 Vols. London: Chapman and Hall, 1949-50.

Emmer, P.C. ed. Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labour before and after Slavery. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986.

Emmer, P.C. and M. Morner, eds. European Expansion and Migration - Essays on the Intercontinental Migration from Africa, Asia, and Europe. New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1992.

Espinet, Ramabai ed. Creation Fire - A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol.1. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, A division of Random House, 1980.

Fraginals, Manuel M., Frank Moya Pons, and Stanley Engerman, eds. Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Glazier, Stephen, ed. Caribbean Ethnicity Revisited. New York: Gordon and Breach, 1985.

Goody, Jack and Stanley Tambiah. Bridewealth and Dowry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Green, W. A. British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-65. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Hall, Douglas. Free Jamaica - An Economic History (1838-1865). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

Hart, K., ed. Women and the Sexual Division of Labor in the Caribbean. Kingston, 1989.

Hobsbawm, Eric and T. Ranger, eds. The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Hobsbawm, Eric. The Age of Empire (1875-1914). London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, 1987.

Holt, T. C. The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Jayawardena, Chandra. Conflict and Solidarity in a Guianese Plantation. London: Athlone Press, 1963.

Jayawardena, Kumari. Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World. London and New Jersey: Zed Books Limited, 1986.

Johnson, Howard. The Bahamas in Slavery and Freedom. Kingston and London: Ian Randle Publishers and James Currey Publishers, 1991.

Klass, Morton. East Indians in Trinidad: A Study in Cultural Persistence. Reprint, Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1988.

Knight, Franklin W., and Colin A. Palmer. eds. The Modern Caribbean. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Krishnamurty, J. ed. Women in Colonial India - Essays on Survival, Work and the State. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Kumar, Dharma. ed. The Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol.2. Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Kumar, Nita. ed. Women as Subjects -- South Asian Histories. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1994.

La Guerre, John. ed. From Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians of Trinidad. St. Augustine, Trinidad: University of West Indies Press, 1985.

Lavrin, Asuncion ed. Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

Lawrence, K. O. A Question of Labor - Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana (1875-1917). Kingston and London: Ian Randle Publishers and James Currey Publishers, 1994.

Liddle, Joanna and Rama Joshi eds. Daughters of Independence - Gender, Caste and Class in India. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986.

Look Lai, Walton. Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Lowenthal, David. West Indian Societies. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Mahase Snr., Anna. My Mother's Daughter - The Autobiography of Anna Mahase Snr. 1899-1978. Union Village, Trinidad: Royards Publishing Company, 1992.

Mandle, Jay R. The Plantation Economy - Population and Economic Change in Guyana (1838-1960). Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973.

Mangru, Basdeo. Benevolent Neutrality: Indian Government Policy and Labor Migration to British Guiana, 1854-1884. London: Hansib, 1987.

Mathurin, Lucille. The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery. Kingston, Jamaica: Jamaica Institute, 1975.

McGlynn, Frank and Seymour Drescher, eds. The Meaning of Freedom - Economics, Politics, and Culture After Slavery. Pittsburg and London: University of Pittsburg Press, 1992.

Mintz, Sidney. Caribbean Transformation. Chicago: Aldine, 1974.

_____. Sweetness and Power - The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985.

Mintz, Sidney and Sally Price, eds. Caribbean Contours. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Mohammed, Patricia and Catherine Shepherd, eds. Gender In Caribbean Development. Mona, Jamaica: The University of West Indies Press, 1988.

Momsen, Janet, ed. Women and Change in the Caribbean. London: James Currey Ltd., 1993.

Moore, Brian L. Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society - Guyana After Slavery, 1838-1891. Montreux, Switzerland: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1987.

_____. Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism - Colonial Guyana 1838-1900. Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1995, and Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, 1995.

Morrissey, Marietta. Slave Women in the New world: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1989.

Nath Dwarka, A History of Indians in Guyana. London: By Author, 1950.

Niehoff, Arthur and Juanita Niehoff. East Indians in the West Indies. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1960.

O' Hanlon, Rosalind. A Comparison between Men and Women: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Prakash, Gyan. Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

_____. The World of the Rural Laborer in Colonial India. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Premdas, Ralph R., ed. The Enigma of Ethnicity: An Analysis of Race in the Caribbean and the World. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies, School of Continuing Studies, 1993.

Ramesar, Marianne Soares. Survivors of Another Crossing - A History of East Indians in Trinidad, 1880-1946. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies, School of Continuing Education, 1994.

Reddock, Rhoda. Women, Labor and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago - A History. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers Limited, 1994.

Rodney, Walter. A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Rosaldo, Michelle Z. and Louise Lamphere, eds. Woman, Culture, and Society. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974.

Rosaldo, Renato. Culture and Truth - The Remaking of Social Analysis. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Ruhomon, Peter. Centenary History of the East Indians in British Guiana, 1838-1938. Georgetown: Daily Chronicle, 1947.

Rushdie, Salman. Imaginary Homelands - Essays and Criticism 1981-1991. London: Granta Books in association with Penguin Books Ltd., 1991.

Saha, Panchanan. Emigration of Indian Labor, 1834-1900. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970.

Sangari, Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid eds. Recasting Women - Essays in Indian Colonial History. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Saunders, Kay, ed. Indentured Labor in the British Empire 1834-1920. London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984.

Schuler, Monica. Alas, Alas, Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Schwartz, Barton, ed. Caste in Overseas Indian Communities. San Francisco: Chandler, 1967.

Scott, Joan Wallach. Gender and the Politics of History. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Scott, Rebecca J. Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Senior, O. Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English Speaking Caribbean. Indiana, 1991.

Shanin, Teodor ed. Peasants and Peasant Societies. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Limited, 1971.

Shepherd, Verene, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey, eds. Engendering History - Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, and London: James Currey, 1995.

Sinha, Mrinalini. Colonial Masculinity - The 'Manly Englishman and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Stern, Steve J. The Secret History of Gender - Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Stolcke, Verena. Coffee Planters, Workers and Wives: Class Conflict and Gender Relations on Sao Paulo Plantations, 1850-1980. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Tinker, Hugh. A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labor Overseas, 1830-1920. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Trotman, David Vincent. Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society, 1838-1900. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

Vertovec, Steven. Hindu Trinidad: Religion, Ethnicity and Socio-economic Change. London and New York: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992.

Weller, Judith. The East Indian Indenture in Trinidad. Rio Pedras, Puerto Rico: Insitute of Caribbean Studies, 1968.

Williams, Brackette F. Stains on My Name, War in My veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Wood, Donald. Trinidad in Transition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Yelvington, Kevin. ed. Trinidad Ethnicity. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

Articles

Adamson, Alan H. "The Reconstruction of Plantation Labor after Emancipation: The Case of British Guiana." In Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese, eds., Race and Slavery in the Western World, 457-473. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Alexander, Sally, Anna Davin and Eve Hostettler. "Laboring Women: A Reply to Eric Hobsbawm." History Workshop 8 (Autumn, 1979): 174-182.

Baker, Christopher. "Economic Reorganization and the Slump in South and Southeast Asia." Comparative Studies in Society and History 23, no.3 (July 1981): 325-349.

Bardhan, Kalpana. "Social Classes and Gender in India: the structure of differences in the condition of women." In Alice W. Clark, ed., Gender and Political Economy - Explorations of South Asian Systems, 146-178. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Bates, Crispin and Marina Carter. "Tribal Migration in India and Beyond." In Gyan Prakash, ed., The World of the Rural Laborer, 205-247. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Bolland, O. Nigel. "Systems of Domination after Slavery: The Control of Land and Labor in the British West Indies after 1838." Comparative Studies in Society and History 26, No. 1 (1981): 591-619.

Brereton, Bridget. "General Problems and Issues in Studying the History of Women." In Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd, eds., Gender in Caribbean Development, 125-143. Mona, Jamaica: The University of West Indies Press, 1988.

_____. "Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women on the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s." In Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, eds., Engendering History - Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective, 63-93. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers and London: James Currey Publishers, 1995.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Conditions for Knowledge of Working-Class Conditions: Employers, Government and the Jute Workers of Calcutta, 1890-1940." In Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., Selected Subaltern Studies, 179-230. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Chamberlain, Mary. "Gender and Memory: Oral History and Women's History." In V. Shepherd, B. Brereton, and B. Bailey, eds., Engendering History - Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective, 94-110. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, and London: James Currey Publishers, 1995.

Chhachhi, Amrita. "Concepts in feminist Theory: Consensus and Controversy." In Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd, eds., Gender in Caribbean Development, 78-98. Mona, Jamica: The University of West Indies Press, 1988.

Chowdhry, Prem. "Customs in a Colonial Economy: Women in Colonial Haryana." In Sangari and Vaid, eds., Recasting Women - Essays in Indian Colonial History, 302-336. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Clifford, James. "Diasporas." Cultural Anthropology 9, No. 3 (1994): 302-338.

Craton, Michael. "The Transition from Slavery to Free Wage labor in the Caribbean, 1780-1890: A Survey with Particular Reference to Recent Scholarship." Slavery and Abolition 13, No.2 (August 1992): 37-67.

Cross, Malcolm. "East Indian-Creole relations in Trinidad and Guiana in the late nineteenth century." In Dabydeen and Samaroo, eds., Across the Dark Waters - Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean, 14-38. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Limited, 1996.

Das, Mahadai. "They Came in Ships." In Ramabai Espinet, ed., Creation Fire - A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry, 187-188. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1990.

Dirks, Nicholas. "Castes of Mind." Representations 37 (Winter 1992):56-78.

Ehrlich, Allen S. "History, Ecology, and Demography in the British Caribbean: An Analysis of East Indian Ethnicity." South Western Journal of Anthropology 27, no.2 (1971): 166-180.

Emmer, P.C. "Immigration into the Caribbean: The Introduction of Chinese and East Indian Indentured Laborers Between 1839 and 1917." In P.C. Emmer and M. Morner, eds., European Expansion and Migration - Essays on the Intercontinental Migration from Africa, Asia, and Europe, 245-276. New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1992.

_____. "The Great Escape: The Migration of Female Indentured Servants from British India to Surinam, 1873-1916." In D. Richardson, ed., Abolition and its Aftermath, 245-266. London: Frank Cass and Company, 1985.

Fraser, Peter. "The Fictive Peasantry: Caribbean Rural Groups in the Nineteenth Century." In Susan Craig, ed. Contemporary Caribbean - A Sociological Reader Vol.1., 319-347. Maracas, Trinidad and Tobago: By Author, 1981.

Hanley, Eric. "Mechanised Rice Cultivation: The Experience of an East Indian Community in Guyana." In Malcolm Cross and Arnaud Marks, eds., Peasants, Plantations and Rural Communities in the Caribbean, 160-192. Surrey, England and Leiden, Netherlands: Department of sociology, University of Surrey, and Department of Caribbean Studies of the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 1979.

Haraksingh, Kusha. "Control and Resistance among Overseas Indian workers: A Study of Labor on the Sugar Plantations of Trinidad, 1875-1917. " Journal of Caribbean History 14 (1980): 1-17.

Harry, Indra S. "Women in Agriculture in Trinidad: An Overview." In Janet Momsen, ed., Women and Change in the Caribbean - A Pan-Caribbean Perspective, 205-218. London: James Currey Limited, 1993.

Kakar, Sudhir. "Feminine Identity in India." In Rehana Ghadially, ed., Women in Indian Society - A Reader, 44-68. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1988.

Kale, Madhavi. "Projecting Identities: Empire and Indentured Labor Migration from India to Trinidad and British Guiana, 1836-1885." In Peter Van der Veer, ed., Nation And Migration, 73-92. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994.

Krishnamurty, J. "The Occupational Structure." In Dharma Kumar, ed., The Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol. 2., 533-550. Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Lal, Brij V. "Laboring Men and Nothing More: Some Problems of Indian Indenture in Fiji." In Kay Saunders, ed., Indentured Labor in the British Empire 1834-1920, 126-157. London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984.

_____. "Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantations." In J. Krishnamurty, ed., Women in Colonial India - Essays on Survival, Work and the State, 163-179. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Lawrence, K.O. "The Evolution of Long-Term Contracts in Trinidad and British Guiana." Jamaica Historical Review 5, no. 2 (1965): 9-27.

_____. "Indians as Permanent Settlers in Trinidad before 1900." In John La Guerre, ed., Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians in Trinidad, 95-116. St. Augustine, Trinidad: University of West Indies Press, 1985.

Mangru, Basdeo. "The Sex Ratio Disparity and its Consequences under the Indenture System in British Guiana." In David Dabydeen and B. Samaroo, eds., India in the Caribbean, 211-230. London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1987.

Marshall, Woodville. "Notes on Peasant Development in the West Indies since 1838." Social and Economic Studies 17 (1968): 1-14.

Massiah, J. "Women in the Caribbean." Vols 1 and 2. Social and Economic Studies. 35: 2, 3 (1986).

Mintz, Sidney W. "Labor and Ethnicity: The Caribbean Conjuncture." In Richard Tardanico, ed., Crises in the Caribbean Basin. Political Economy of the World Systems Annuals No. 9, 47-57. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1987.

Mohammed, Patricia. "The Caribbean Family Revisited." In Mohammed and Shepherd, eds., Gender in Caribbean Development, 172-184. Mona, Jamaica: The University of West Indies Press, 1988.

_____. "Structures of Experience: Gender, Ethnicity and Class in the Lives of Two East Indian Women." In Kevin Yelvington, ed., Trinidad Ethnicity, 208-234. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

_____. "Gender as a Primary Signifier in the Construction of Community and State among Indians in Trindad." Caribbean Quarterly. 40, nos. 3&4 (Sept.-Dec. 1994): 32-43.

_____. "Writing Gender into History: The Negotiation of Gender Relations Among Indian Men and women in Post-indenture Trinidad Society, 1917-1947." In Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey, eds., Engendering History - Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective, 20-47. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers and London: James Currey Publishers, 1995.

Mohapatra, Prabhu Prasad. "Coolies and Colliers: A Study in the Agrarian Context of Labour Migration from Chota Nagpur, 1880-1920." Studies in History (New Series) 1, no. 2 (1985): 247-303.

Momsen, Janet Henshall. "Gender Roles in Caribbean Agricultural Labor." In Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, eds., Caribbean Freedom - Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present, 216-224. Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, and London: James Curry Publishers, 1993. 1st. American Edition, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996.

Moore, Brian. "The Retention of Caste Notions among the Indian Immigrants in British Guiana during the Nineteenth Century." Comparative Studies in Society and History 19, no.1 (1977): 96-107.

Niranjana, Tejaswini. "'The Indian in Me': Gender, Identity and Cultural Politics in Trinidad." Presented at ISER-NCIC Conference on Challenge and Change: The Indian Diaspora in its Historical and Contemporary Contexts. The University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 11th. to 18th. August, 1995.

Poynting, Jeremy. "East Indian Women in the Caribbean: Experience and Voice." In David Dabydeen and B.Samaroo, eds., India in the Caribbean, 321-361. London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1987.

Prakash, Gyan. "The History and Historiography of rural laborers in Colonial India." In Gyan Prakash, ed., The World of the Rural Laborer in Colonial India, 1-46. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Reddock, Rhoda. "Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, 1845-1917: Freedom Denied." Caribbean Quarterly 32, Nos.3 & 4 (1986): 27-49.

Rothermund, D. "A Survey of Rural Migration and Land Reclamation in India, 1885." Journal of Peasant Studies 4 (1977): 230-42.

Samaroo, Brinsley. "The Presbyterian Church as an Agent of Integration in Trinidad during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." Caribbean Studies 14, no.5 (1975): 41-55.

_____. "Missionary Methods and Local Responses: The Canadian Presyterians and the East Indians in the Caribbean." In B. Brereton and W. Dookeran, eds., East Indians in the Caribbean: Colonialism and the Struggle for Identity, 93-115. New York: Kraus, 1982.

Scott, Rebecca J. "Exploring the Meaning of Freedom: Postemancipation Societies in Comparative Perspective." Hispanic American Historical Review 68, No. 3 (1988): 407-428.

Shepherd, Verene A. Verene A. Shepherd, "Control, resistance, accomodation and race relations: Aspects of indentureship experience of East Indian immigrants in Jamaica, 1845-1921." In David Dabydeen and B. Samaroo, eds., Across the Dark Waters - Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean, 65-87. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Limited, 1996.

_____. "Emancipation Through Servitude: Aspects of the Condition of Indian Women In Jamaica, 1845-1945." In H. Beckles and V. Shepherd, eds., Caribbean Freedom - Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present, 245-250. Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, and London: James Curry Publishers, 1993. 1st. American Edition, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996.

_____. "The Occupations of Indian Women in Jamaica, 1845-1943: Gender Perspectives." Paper Presented at ISER/NCIC Conference on Challenge and Change: The Indian Diaspora in its Historical Contexts. The University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 11th. to 18th. August, 1995.

_____. "Gender, Migration and Settlement: The Indentureship and Post-Indentureship Experience of Indian Females in Jamaica, 1845-1943." In V. Shepherd, B. Brereton and B. Bailey, eds., Engendering History - Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective, 233-257. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers and London: James Currey Publishers, 1995.

Singh, Kelvin. "East Indians and Larger Society." In John La Guerre, ed., Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians of Trinidad, 33-62. St. Augustine, Trinidad: University of West Indies Press, 1985.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives." History and Theory, Vol.24, no.3 (1985): 247-272.

Srinivas, M.N. and A.M. Shah. "The Myth of the Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village." Economic Weekly 12 (1960): 1375-78.

Tambiah, Stanley J. "Bridewealth and Dowry revisited: The Position of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa and North India." Current Anthropology 30, No.4 (August-October 1989): 413-435.

Trotman, David V. "Women and Crime in Late Nineteenth Century Trinidad." Caribbean Quarterly 30, Nos. 3 & 4 (1984): 60-72.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "Labor and Emancipation in Dominica: Contribution To A Debate." Caribbean Quarterly 30 (1984):73-84.

Visaria, Leela and Praveen Visaria. "Population (1757-1947)." In Dharma Kumar, ed., The Cambridge Economic History of India Vol. 2., 463-532. Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Wadley, Susan. "Women and the Hindu Tradition." In Rehana Ghadially, ed., Women in Indian Society - A Reader, 23-43. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1988.

Wilmot, Swinthon. "Emancipation in Action: Workers and Wage Conflict in Jamaica, 1838-1840." Jamaica Journal 19, no.3 (1986):55-62.

Yang, Anand. "Peasants on the Move: A Study of Internal Migration in India." Journal of Interdisciplinary History 10 (1979): 37-58.

Young, Kate. "Notes on Social Relations of Gender." In Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd, eds., Gender in Caribbean Development, 97-109. Mona, Jamaica: The University Of West Indies Press, 1988.

Unpublished Theses and Dissertations

Look Lai, Walton. "Sugar Plantations and Indentured Labor: Migrations from China and India to the British West Indies, 1838-1918." Ph.D., New York University, 1991.

Mohammed, Patricia. "A Social History of Post-Migrant Indians in Trinidad from 1917 to 1947 - A Gender Perspective." Ph.D., Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands, 1994.

Tikasingh, Gerad. "The Establishment of the Indians in Trinidad, 1870-1900." Ph.D., University of West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 1976.